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# PUNCH

*without*

# JUDY

a new play

by

## Max Catto

*author of*
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# PUNCH WITHOUT JUDY

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FRENCH SALAD

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THEY WALK ALONE

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# PUNCH WITHOUT JUDY

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

MAX CATTO

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1940

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TO

ERIC GLASS

WITHOUT

WHOM . . .

Title

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PUNCH WITHOUT JUDY was first produced at the "Q" Theatre, London, on June 12th, 1939, and subsequently presented by Howard Wyndham and Bronson Albery at the New Theatre, December 5th, 1939, with the following cast :

| | |
|---|---|
| Simon Revel | PETER MURRAY HILL |
| Micky Saunders | HENRY KENDALL |
| Mr. Moke | ERNEST JAY |
| Mrs. Moke | MARJORIE RHODES |
| Peter Stevens | TERENCE PLUNKET GREENE |
| Judy Stevens | ELIZABETH ALLAN |
| "Jackie" | OLGA EDWARDES |
| Geoffrey Summers | BASIL LANGTON |

The Play produced by IRENE HENTSCHEL

Title

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## LIST OF CHARACTERS

SIMON REVEL
MICKY SAUNDERS
JUDY STEVENS
PETER STEVENS
MR. MOKE
MRS. MOKE
" JACKIE "
GEOFFREY SUMMERS

The action of the play takes place in Simon Revel's room in Bloomsbury.

Title [redacted]

Author [redacted]

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# PUNCH WITHOUT JUDY

## ACT ONE

### SCENE I

SIMON REVEL'S *rooms in* MRS. MOKE'S—*somewhere on the salubrious side of Bloomsbury.* MRS. MOKE *has been running "rooms" for seventeen years—which means that she gives her "clients" just enough comfort to make them stay, not enough luxury to pamper them and just enough dinginess to make her establishment "romantic-like". This room is typical of the others in the house. The furniture has been haphazardly collected, and the mantelpiece is full of gimcrack oddments and souvenirs left by long departed tenants. The room having to do service for eating, working and sleeping, the main items of furniture are a solid plush-covered table, an ancient wooden easy chair in front of the fireplace and a divan bed covered with a gaudy spread and a few cushions. The walls are hung with ten times as many pictures and cartoons as are necessary—all relics of vanished occupants—ranging from framed "Tit-bits" presentation plates to a couple of snappy Parisian nudes ("Tatler" brand). . . . The room is cosy. It has been lived in by a succession of ghosts for seventeen years, and it has been worn into a sort of workaday comfort.*

*The window is* L, *fireplace,* R. *The door to combined kitchen-bathroom is* R, *with door to landing and stairs,* rear.

*When the curtain rises, it is about eight o'clock on a summer evening.* SIMON REVEL *is sitting at the table, writing steadily. It is hot, and he wears a short sleeved shirt, flannel trousers and slippers. The table is covered with note books, a few heavy reference books and—prominently—a microscope and slides.* SIMON *is about twenty-five, an amiable young man with a slow smile, common-*

*sensical eyes and a tendency to a bit more seriousness than suits his age. A barrel organ is heard playing a faded Viennese waltz outside* —SIMON *gets up with a suppressed fury, shouts down. It stops . . . Then, from upstairs, comes a distant wave of gramophone jazz and a lot of hearty spasmodic treading on the ceiling as though someone were practising dance steps.* SIMON *pauses irresolutely—then dropping his pen, hurries to the door, leaning out.*

SIMON. [*Shouting up*] Micky !

[*Voice heard above.*]

Shut that row, you fool ! If I have to come up. . . .

MICKY'S VOICE. Eh ?

SIMON. You heard !

MICKY'S VOICE. [*Singing*] " Baby, what I wouldn't do—o—o . . ."

SIMON. You darned ape.

MICKY'S VOICE. Hotcha ! Coming down !

[*The gramophone stops,* SIMON *returns to the table grumpily—then a clatter on the stairs and* MICKY SAUNDERS *comes in. He is a sturdily built young man—" a mad Irisher " as* SIMON *says—and sublimely cheerful because he's alive to-day and to-morrow may not come. He wears a tweed shirt and shabby flannels.*]

MICKY. Don't you like music ?

SIMON. Music !

MICKY. [*Waggling his stern, singing*] " With plenty of money and you—oohoo. . . ."

SIMON. Shut up.

MICKY. What are you working for ? It's hot.

SIMON. I didn't ask you to come down.

MICKY. Some host.

SIMON. Don't sit down.

MICKY. [*Dropping into chair*] Got any beer ?

SIMON. No. [*Writing again.*]

MICKY. How're the bugs ?

SIMON. [*Rudely*] Doing well.

MICKY. Mother and kids. . . . [*Crossing to microscope, squinting down it*] What's this ? A family ?

SIMON. It is.

MICKY. Talk about the quins ! When pa puts ma in the family way, it's two thousand bonny bairns in a single go. You ought to try birth control on these bugs. . . . Sure about the beer ?

SIMON. I've got no beer !

MICKY. [*Inquisitively*] What's in that cupboard ?

SIMON. Never mind that cupboard.

MICKY. I've got a thirst like emery paper.

SIMON. Just as a matter of interest, gorilla—I'm trying to work.

MICKY. Go ahead. I'll watch you. [*Adopts admiring pose.*]

SIMON. [*Patiently, putting down pen*] Listen. I'll put up with the gramophone. Get upstairs !

MICKY. [*Loftily*] No. My mood's gone. I'll just get some pleasure watching you sweat.

[*Pause.* MICKY *begins to whistle drearily.*]

SIMON. Oh, shut up !

MICKY. It's hot.

SIMON. A damned sight hotter in the place I wish you were in.

MICKY. [*Theatrically*] Hear that ?

SIMON. What ?

MICKY. [*Rasping dreadfully*] My gullet's rattling. I'm parched.

SIMON. They say Eno's makes a cooling drink.

MICKY. And that's a damned insulting remark to make to a pal who's passing out. [*Idly—clinking a few coppers from one hand to the other*] How much've you got ?

SIMON. Eh ?

MICKY. I've got fourpence. Can you manage fivepence and I'll send old Moke out for a bottle of froth ?

SIMON. No.

MICKY. Would threepence leave you destitute ?

SIMON. I'm broke.

MICKY. [*Bitterly*] The most pathetic phrase known to man. (*Reading from one of* SIMON's *text books :*] " In the case of the adult rat . . . sexual activity can be directly traced . . . to the sex-hormones. . . ." My God, what's that ? Marie Stopes ?

SIMON. Biology, pal.

MICKY. Well, I don't know why the devil I'm wasting my time talking to you. I'm going to have a bath ! [*Crosses to bathroom casually—makes a sudden leap for cupboard at the identical moment* SIMON *springs for it, too. They struggle.*]

SIMON. Oh, no, you don't !

MICKY. So there is a bottle. . . .!

SIMON. Keep off.

MICKY. Can't you trust me ?

SIMON. No.

MICKY. Very wise. [*With dignity*] Permit me to pass, Mr. Revel. I have some work to do.

[*Props drawing board on table, produces silk hat from box in corner and poses it on a vase on the mantelpiece : which model, sitting, he begins to sketch.* SIMON *watches him furtively.*]

SIMON. Who's that for ?

MICKY. Abrahamson. He's got a job lot of silk hats he wants to get rid of. I get five quid if I do a snappy advert for him.

SIMON. That's not work, it's pleasure.

MICKY. Don't get funny with me.

SIMON. What the well dressed man is wearing. Do you get the topper thrown in ?

MICKY. Sure. I'm keeping it for Ascot. . . . [*Affectedly*] And, of course, one *simply* must wear it when one goes yachting at Cowes.

SIMON. [*Smiling wearily*] Hell, I'm tired. Got a headache.

MICKY. You're overdoing it, old son.

SIMON. Don't worry. I won't crack up.

MICKY. Don't be so sure.

SIMON. Work, work, work . . . who invented it ? [*Smiling*] I'm all right. [*Sits at microscope again.*]

MICKY. I say—come and sit for me, will you ? [*At topper*] I can't get the slant of it.

SIMON. I'm busy.

[MICKY *crosses to door, and bellows down.*]

MICKY. Moke !

SIMON. [*Casually*] He's busy, too.

MICKY. He's going to be busier still.

SIMON. He was sweating up the stairs ten minutes ago with more luggage than I ever saw. There are new people moving in.

MICKY. Eh ?

SIMON. I said there are new people moving in.

MICKY. [*Cheerfully*] What, into Mrs. Moke's best front rooms ? H. and C. laid on, and fine southern aspect of Bloomsbury's tarts. . . .? What was it like ?

SIMON. [*Vaguely*] What was—what. . . .

MICKY. The luggage ? Posh-looking stuff ?

SIMON. Pigskin and all that.

MICKY. Golly. May be good for half a crown touch. [*Roaring*] Moke ! Moke ! Damn and blast your . . .!

SIMON. Shut up. Do you want the new people to hear ?

MICKY. [*With inexpressible contempt*] Proper *snurches* I'll bet. . . . They always are. [*As* MR. MOKE *enters*] So you're here.

MR. MOKE. I'm here.

[MR. MOKE *is an apparently humourless and dishevelled little man with a habit of coming out with what* MICKY *calls "cracks". He has a heavy moustache, a disillusioned expression and wears an apron over his waistcoat.*]

MICKY. Look here, Moke, what sort of service is this ? If you can't jump to it smarter, you'll have Mr. Revel and me popping off. . . .

MR. MOKE. With or without last month's rent ?

MICKY. So your wife's been talking to you, huh? For God's sake, smile! [*Surveying apron with disgust*] What are you supposed to be? Queen of the May?

MR. MOKE. What can I do you for?

MICKY. Who's moving in?

MR. MOKE. Couple.

MICKY. Married?

MR. MOKE. Brother and sister. Nice young pair.

MICKY. Don't get maudlin at your age. Nice luggage, I hear. Smell of money, eh . . . ?

MR. MOKE. (*Drably*] I couldn't say.

MICKY. You'd be a nice addition to a funeral wake. You know what's the matter with you, Moke—? You let that wife of yours bully you. . . . [*A distant female voice can be heard calling shrilly, " Moke, Moke! "*] There goes the charmer! Tell her to go to hell, Moke.

MR. MOKE. Well, what did you want me for?

MICKY. [*Bitterly*] Sex-life of a worm. . . . Sit for me, will you? Won't keep you ten ticks.

MR. MOKE. Again?

MICKY. Go on.

MR. MOKE. (*Disconsolately*] I'm busy . . . you'll have Mrs. Moke after me. . . .

MICKY. [*Persuasively*] Just let me rough this in. Come on! [*Plants* MR. MOKE *on back of armchair, places silk hat on his head*] You're a plutocrat, see?—you're one of the blokes who wears Abrahamson's silk hats. . . . You're sitting at the wheel of your car—put your hands up, you fool, get hold of it—and you're saying to the world at large " Abrahamson's of Theobald's Road! I get my silk hats there! " . . . [*Adjusts him in position and shows an ecstatic beam on his face for* MR. MOKE *to copy*] Got it?

MR. MOKE. [*Rigid*] O.K.

MICKY. Now hold it. [*Goes back to the drawing board and sketches rapidly*] You'll get a commission on this, Moke. . . .

MR. MOKE. That's what you always say.

MICKY. I mean it this time. That's a fine head you've got, Moke.

MR. MOKE. You're telling me.

MICKY. Romantic, and all that.

MR. MOKE. I'm not surprised. My mother was a gipsy.

MICKY. You were born out of your station, Moke. *You* ought to be wearing silk hats for breakfast.

MR. MOKE. I'd make a few feminine hearts beat quicker, wouldn't I ?

MICKY. Don't move ! . . . Smirk a bit.

MR. MOKE. What for ?

MICKY. Look as though you're enjoying that hat. Don't steer the car into me . . . keep that way, ass.

MR. MOKE. This all right ?

MICKY. Hold it. . . .

MR. MOKE. If Mrs. Moke comes up, I'll catch it. [MRS. MOKE *is heard crying*, " *Moke ! Moke !* "] There she goes. . . .

MICKY. [*Despairingly*] All right. You're hopeless. Come back after supper.

[MR. MOKE *gets down : assumes a jaunty posture and a dentifrice-advert smile.*]

MR. MOKE. " Abrahamson's of Theobald's Road ! I get my silk hats there ! " [*Removes silk hat almost wistfully.*]

MICKY. [*Casually*] Don't go yet, Moke. I want a bath.

MR. MOKE. Want me to give you one ?

MICKY. [*Removing shoes*] Lend me a tanner for the geyser.

[MR. MOKE *turns to go. . . .* MICKY *seizes him.*]

[*Roughly*] What's the matter with you ! Don't you want me to be clean ?

MR. MOKE. Not at a tanner a time.

MICKY. You'll get it back.

MR. MOKE. Sez you.

MICKY. [*Changing his tone*] See here, Moke, I'm putting all these tanners down in a little book. [*Producing it*] See this, tanner last Friday, tanner the Thursday before. . . . You don't want me to forget 'em, do you ? Well, what would

you rather have, the six tanners I owe you or complete liquidation, lock, stock and barrel. . . . [*Storming*] Give me that tanner !

MR. MOKE. [*Fumbling for it*] For the geyser ?

MICKY. [*Taking it cheerfully*] Sure.

[MR. MOKE *going.*]

Wait a minute. I'm putting the sixpence in this tin for geyser money. [*Crosses to row of tins on mantelpiece*] See it ?

MR. MOKE. Well ?

MICKY. [*Coolly*] Now I'm lending sixpence to the electricity account. [*Clinks coppers from tin to tin*] I'm transferring tanner to the laundry tin and I'm withdrawing ninepence on account of director's expenses. Here's the ninepence ! Hop out quick and get a bottle of beer !

MR. MOKE. [*Dryly*] With that brain you'll die young.

MICKY. You see that I'm not old before I get that beer.

[MRS. MOKE *is heard again,* " *Moke, Moke !* ".]

Never mind her. Go on, go on !

[*Pushes* MR. MOKE *out urgently and comes back centre.*]

Whew !

SIMON. [*Chuckling*] You blasted rogue.

MICKY. A rogue by any other name'd smell as sweet.

[*Goes into bathroom—returning minus trousers, wearing only short pants and towel.* SIMON *replaces coppers in the tins with a sigh.*]

MICKY. [*Shuddering*] The geyser's cold. [*Sits*]

SIMON. The bathroom's the place for that manly torso. Do you have to sit there like an Ovaltine baby ?

MICKY. [*Reclining languorously, chanting*] " I'll sing thee songs of Araby. . . ."

[*A knock :* MRS. MOKE *looks in. She is an angular and very Cockney female of about fifty. Long association with generations of* " *rooms* " *has given her a suspicious expression, but there is a glimmer of a chuckle somewhere beneath. She wears her hair in an unprepossessing bun.* MICKY *covers his chest coquettishly.*]

Mrs. Moke ! You're seeing all my muscles at once !

MRS. MOKE. No treat to me.

MICKY. Come and sit on my lap, Mrs. Moke. [*Ogling the ceiling*] I'm feeling that-a-way. . . .

MRS. MOKE. Where's Moke ?

MICKY. Haven't seen him since—last Thursday cum Michaelmas. What's he done—eloped with the new skivvy ?

MRS. MOKE. He was up here ten seconds ago.

MICKY. [*Blatantly*] Oh, no !

MRS. MOKE. I heard.

MICKY. Never mind what you heard. [*Advancing truculently*] And don't come up here casting nasturtiums. . . . [*Stroking* MRS. MOKE'S *bun of hair luxuriously*] Oh, Mokey-dokey, with those tresses I could fall for yer in a big-sized way ! Moke's gone out for beer.

MRS. MOKE. And there's the new people's stuff all over the place. . . .

MICKY. What stuff ?

MRS. MOKE. Half the luggage in the hall and the two armchairs stuck on the stairs. . . .!

MICKY. [*Vastly interested*] Armchairs ?

MRS. MOKE. And why shouldn't decent people 'ave their own armchairs ?

MICKY. I call it stinking ostentation. . . .

MRS. MOKE. [*Fiercely*] Will one of you help ? We'll be on the stairs all week.

MICKY. [*Elegantly*] I'm having my sun-bath !

SIMON. [*Hopelessly*] All right, I'll help !

MRS. MOKE. 'Urry. [*Exits.* SIMON *follows, pausing in doorway, witheringly.*]

SIMON. Come on, Lady Godiva ! Give us a lift. [*Exits.*]

[*A few moments elapse :* MR. MOKE *slips in with bottle.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Breathlessly*] Had to come up the fire-escape.

MICKY. Thank God, you've come.

[*Goes to cupboard eagerly.*]

Now where's that bottle-opener. . . .

MR. MOKE. [*Obligingly, opening penknife*] Here you are.

MICKY. [*Coldly*] Regular boy-scout, aren't you?

[*Pause.*]

[*Vulgarly*] Well, what're you waiting for? There's only one bottle.

MR. MOKE. [*Feelingly*] Made me breathless coming up that fire-escape!

MICKY. What do I care?

MR. MOKE. Now I've got to sweat with all that stuff on the stairs. . . .

MICKY. Why can't you say straight out, "Give us a lick"? [*Fills one glass*] Will you take it in a glass—or straight out of the bottle?

MR. MOKE. [*Jovially*] That's handsome of you.

MICKY. Here's a glass.

[*Fills another and gives him. Then toasts.*]

Muck-a-muck!

MR. MOKE. [*Raising glass*] Stink-ho!

[*Both drink.*]

MICKY. Good, eh?

MR. MOKE. Invigorating!

MICKY. Well, take the weight off your dogs. [*Points to chair. Both sit.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Hesitantly*] Has Mrs. Moke been . . . restless. . . .?

MICKY. She did inquire for you, now I recall.

MR. MOKE. Viciously?

MICKY. There *was* a touch of murder in her voice. What're you afraid of? The rolling pin?

MR. MOKE. Her voice.

MICKY. Drink your beer and give her hell. [*Both drink—then* MICKY *looks* MR. MOKE *up and down*] You're a fine specimen of the ruling male. She's only a woman isn't she?

MR. MOKE. So I thought when I was courting her.

MICKY. A woman's a rag, a bone and a hank of hair. . . .

I'm a cynic, Moke. Bitter. That's me. Finish your beer and get some fur on your chest.

MR. MOKE. [*Chucklingly*] We don't need to wonder how much you've got on yours.

[*There is a sudden crash on the landing : then a knock on the door.* PETER STEVENS' *head pokes in.* PETER *is about twenty-three, rather better dressed than is usual in* MRS. MOKE'S—*he has a boyish eager air with the faintest touch of condescension in his cheerfulness.*]

PETER. [*Excitedly*] Oh, sorry ! I say, have you got a piece of rope ?

MICKY. [*Calmly*] Used the last bit yesterday, hanging my mother-in-law. What's up ?

PETER. The gramophone's wedged in the stairs.

MICKY. Good. Now we shall have music wherever we go !

PETER. It's a ruddy nuisance. . . . [*Warmly*] Oh, Mr. Moke ! Mrs. Moke was looking for you. . . .

MR. MOKE. [*Dignified*] I know.

[*There is a good deal of crashing and bumping going on outside.*]

MICKY. Care for some beer ? [*holding up bottle.*]

PETER. No, thanks. . . .

MICKY. Good. Because there isn't a drop. [*Coarsely*] Well, go on, Moke. They need you, don't they ?

MR. MOKE. I'm going. . . .

MICKY. [*To* PETER] If Hercules isn't enough—whistle three times and p'raps I'll come.

[JUDY STEVENS *comes into the doorway impetuously. She is about twenty-four. She is not strictly beautiful, but there is something more than attractive in her dancing eyes and curious air of independence.*]

JUDY. Come on, Peter ! We've got it moving at last ! [*Her eyes resting on* MR. MOKE] Oh, there you are, Mr. Moke ! Mrs. Moke was . . .

[MRS. MOKE *comes into the doorway. She looks at* MR.

MOKE *grimly. She uses two words :* "*Hop it.*" MR. MOKE *exits meekly.* PETER *and* MRS. MOKE *follow him.*]

MICKY. Excuse my negligée.

JUDY. [*Chuckling*] Of course. How do you do.

MICKY. How do you do ! I'm Micky Saunders.

JUDY. I'm Judy Stevens. That was my brother, Peter.

MICKY. Charming fellow !

JUDY. Isn't he ? [*Looks at the bottle thirstily*] Oh, I say !

MICKY. [*Turning it upside down regretfully*] The fount of Gilead has dried up. I only had a glassful myself. . . . [*Grinning*] Sit down, pal. Let those mutts sweat.

JUDY. No, I really must help ! I say—be a pal and give us a lift !

MICKY. O.K. Like this ?

JUDY. No, dress !

MICKY. Half a tick. [*Crosses to bathroom—as* SIMON *comes in followed by* PETER. *Both look hot and dishevelled.*]

SIMON. [*Grinning*] It's no use. . . . It's good and properly stuck. [*To* JUDY] Hullo—met our tame Tarzan ?

MICKY. [*Languidly*] All handsome men are slightly naked. [*Exits to bathroom.*]

PETER. Look here, Judy ! . Let's have another go at it after supper. Mr. Moke's not feeling well and Mrs. Moke's taken him down to. . . .

JUDY. [*Helplessly*] But, Peter, darling, the room's in such a muck. We can't possibly eat in it until we've straightened up. . . .

SIMON. Eat here.

JUDY. We couldn't do that.

SIMON. Why not ?

JUDY. [*Looking at table*] You're busy, for one thing. . .

SIMON. With Micky around ? [*Slams books shut*] Have supper with us !

PETER. That's decent of you.

SIMON. [*Looking at* JUDY] You will ?

PETER. I'll say she will !

JUDY. [*With a little smile*] All right, then. Thank you. [SIMON *begins to remove microscope, books, etc.*] Now you've asked us, it's such a relief. I'm so weary, I could just curl up like a cat and simply *purr*. . . . [*Looking from chair to chair, littered with* MICKY's *clothes, gramophone records and other debris*] Could I sit somewhere where it's not. . . .?

SIMON. [*Smiling at disorder, making room for her*] Sorry.

MICKY. [*Entering, plus trousers now—to* JUDY *and* PETER *amiably*] Been admiring our menage ? Quite a Louis XIVth touch !

JUDY. [*Demurely*] I was just saying to Peter—absolutely true to type.

PETER. [*Restlessly*] I say—if we're going to eat . . . I'm hungry. . . .

MICKY. [*Tolerantly*] Ah, these growing boys. Buddy, you're sitting on my socks.

[*Begins to pull them on, then shoes.*]

Now how about those eats ?

SIMON. Hop out for four portions of fish and. . . .

MICKY. Chips. Suits me. But using what for cash ?

JUDY. You mustn't do that.

SIMON. Why not ?

JUDY. We've got a hamper downstairs.

SIMON. But we invited you to eat. . . .

MICKY. [*Vulgarly*] What's all this false modesty ! God lumme, casting pearls before swine. . . . Where's that ruddy hamper ? Let me get my hands on it !

PETER. [*Warmly, rising*] Come on, we'll get it up !

MICKY. [*Dragging on coat*] Hampers, eh ? . . . Who's the fairy godmother ?

JUDY. Father. He thought we might be hungry first day here.

MICKY. [*Vibrantly*] What a papa. . . . Come on !

[*Exits rapidly with* PETER.]

SIMON. I didn't tell you my name. It's Simon Revel.

JUDY. How do you do ?

SIMON. [*Chuckling*] Charmed, I'm sure . . . Let's get the table laid.

JUDY. I like Mr. — Saunders.

SIMON. Micky ? He's all right.

JUDY. Do you live together ?

SIMON. We share these rooms. Micky's studio's upstairs and I work in here. [*Pointing to kitchen*] That's the kitchen-bathroom. It does for both of us. [*Waving an arm vaguely*] The tablecloth's about. . . .

JUDY. Where ?

SIMON. We had one last week.

JUDY. [*Retrieving it from depths of settee*] Got it !

SIMON. Grab these knives. [*Bundles handful of cutlery on table as* JUDY *lays cloth. During the ensuing, both are busy arranging the table. . . .*]

JUDY. Who cooks ?

SIMON. Micky—with the help of Mr. Lyons and Mr. Heinz.

JUDY. And who darns ? [*Wagging finger through hole in tablecloth.*]

SIMON. [*Professionally*] Now I had a stab at that once.

JUDY. Marvellous !

SIMON. Wangle the hole about so the cups don't fall through.

JUDY. You and Mr. Saunders seem to live—awfully cosily.

SIMON. [*Curiously*] Do you really think so ?

JUDY. [*Hesitantly*] Well, everything looks so—matey. . . .

SIMON. Don't let the beer-and-skittles atmosphere fool you. Life isn't like this *all* the time.

JUDY. Oh. Isn't it ?

SIMON. [*A little aggressively*] We have to work, you know.

JUDY. Hard ?

SIMON. Harder than you'd think. . . . And we don't exactly roll in wealth. So it's not surprising if we lift the safety valve now and again. It's the only release blokes like us have got.

JUDY. Oh. [*A little aback at his intensity.*]

SIMON. [*Smiling*] Anyway, you'll have nice rooms below. . . . [*Casually*] You and your brother—er, studying. . . .?

JUDY. Me—art ! Peter's taking law at King's.

SIMON. Good old King's.

JUDY. He'll go into the business one day.

SIMON. Er—papa's. . . .?

JUDY. Yes.

SIMON. Very nice ! You going to live on art ?

JUDY. Heavens, no !

SIMON. Very wise ! You'd think Micky chews these knives from the dents in 'em. . . . You'll be able to talk art to Micky. He's a cartoonist, you know.

JUDY. How exciting.

SIMON. [*Chuckling*] Very. If he didn't have to live on it.

JUDY. I suppose you're a student, too ?

SIMON. Eh ? Yes.

JUDY. What kind ?

SIMON. A budding biologist.

JUDY. Now that sounds sensible.

SIMON. [*Looking at her frankly*] What ? You don't think it's unromantic ?

JUDY. Oh, no.

SIMON. You're a curious young woman. How old are you ? Twenty-three ?

JUDY. . . . Four.

SIMON. [*Amiably*] Well, we live and learn. I was waiting for you to say [*mimicking mincingly*] " Biology . . . how cunning ! "—and look at that microscope as if the thing crawled with bacteria.

JUDY. [*Smiling*] You're enthusiastic, aren't you ?

SIMON. You bet I am. . . . It's we damn biologists who're teaching you how to live !

JUDY. Oh—er, yes ?

SIMON. We're cleansing your world, we're improving your race ! We're teaching you life and sex and how to have kids —bigger and better kids. [*Towering over her aggressively*]

Your kids, young woman, 'll weigh heavier and live happier because we biologists. . . .

JUDY. [*Backing with a mock flutter*] You know, I'm awfully young. . . .

SIMON. [*Wisely*] Not so young that you can't learn a new crack or two.

[MICKY *and* PETER *come in, carrying hamper, followed by* MRS. MOKE *in a menacing mood.*]

MRS. MOKE. We can't 'ave that stuff blocking the stairs. . .

SIMON. [*Firmly*] I'm talking !

MRS. MOKE. [*Swelling*] And why did Moke come down smelling of beer. . . .?

MICKY. [*Coarsely*] Pipe down.

SIMON. [*Proceeding sublimely*] Give me a drop of blood on a slide and I've got an empire to fool with. Just give me one drop of Mrs. Moke's precious life fluid—and I'll tell you what her unfortunate parents were and why. I'll tell you why they begot her and what. I'll tell you. . . . [*Advancing on her now.*]

MRS. MOKE. [*Retreating*] Don't come near me.

SIMON [*Sibilantly*] Mrs. Moke—shed your blood in the cause of science. I want to see what you're made of. Isn't it fascinating, Mrs. Moke—? to think of all the little Mokes swimming in your veins, all kinds of Mokes, blonde ones and dark ones, cockeyed Mokes and mulish Mokes. . . .

MRS. MOKE. [*Almost alarmed now*] What have you got in your hand——?

SIMON. You'll see.

MRS. MOKE. I won't !

SIMON. [*Yearningly*] Come to my arms, Mrs. Moke. . . .

MRS. MOKE. [*At the door*] Not me ! You're mad !

[*Exits with a dart.*]

SIMON. [*Shouting down after her*] Tell your husband if he gets us some more beer—I'll dissect him for nothing whenever he wants !

[*Comes back, drops flat on settee, laughing.*]

I feel better now !

MICKY. [*Diffidently*] Only talking about beer. . . .

SIMON. What about it ?

MICKY. [*Peering into hamper*] No beer here.

[SIMON *and* MICKY *look at each other long and intensely . . . then make a unanimous spring to mantelpiece.*]

SIMON, MICKY. [*Together*] Gas money !

SIMON. How much ?

[SIMON *empties tin on table.*]

MICKY. Three and a kick !

SIMON. Four bottles. Good ! Hop out and get them.

JUDY. [*Helplessly*] But we couldn't dream of. . . .

MICKY. [*To* PETER *in broad dialect*] Coom on, lad. I'll show you the 'Ole in the Wall !

[*The two exit.* SIMON *begins to empty hamper.*]

SIMON. Hullo. What barbaric luxury is this ? Half a chicken ! [*Holds it up.*]

JUDY. But you like biology, don't you ? . . . [*Furtively, she is watching him.*]

SIMON. [*Cheerfully*] Love it. And live for it.

JUDY. Salad ! [*Displaying warmly.*]

SIMON. And fruit.

JUDY. [*Softly*] Father's rather sweet. He really thought his chicks were leaving the nest. He said good-bye almost as though he were tossing his little ones into the big bad city.

SIMON. And mother ?

JUDY. There isn't one.

SIMON. Sorry. . . . So you're really going to be an artist ?

JUDY. Yes.

SIMON. A good 'un ?

JUDY. Not very good. But it keeps me occupied.

SIMON. You'll find some salt in there. . . . [*Pointing to dresser*] You know, you sound as though there are shekels in the family.

JUDY. I suppose there are.

SIMON. Good ! When the wolf scratches at the door, we'll know where to hide from it.

[MICKY *and* PETER *return hastily.*]

Here, you're quick. . . .

MICKY. I'm slow ! [*Delving behind settee*] Might as well take the empties back—manage another bottle with these.

PETER. [*Suddenly—exuberantly*] I say ! This is rather fun, isn't it ?

[MICKY, *kneeling by settee, turns a vague wondering face at him.*]

MICKY. Eh ?

PETER. I said, it was rather fun !

MICKY. Fun. . . . [*Looks at* SIMON *hopelessly*] What a word. Well, I suppose even Peter Pan grew up !

[*Going to door with armful of " empties "—there is a sudden sharp rapping on the ceiling above.* MICKY *pauses oddly.*]

Oh. I forgot about her.

SIMON. Who ?

MICKY. [*Listlessly*] Jackie. I left her upstairs.

SIMON. And you didn't say. You are a beaut !

PETER. If you've got a friend. . . .

MICKY. [*Mildly*] A girl friend, sonny.

JUDY. Well, do ask her down ! We'd love to. . . .

MICKY. [*Gently*] No.

JUDY. No ?

MICKY. Jackie isn't exactly your class. [*Coolly*] Jackie and you wouldn't mix. I like to preserve my friends from embarrassment.

SIMON. Shut up, Micky. . . .

MICKY. Do you mind ? Thanks. Come on, Peter.

[*He and* PETER *exit.* JUDY *looks after them curiously.*]

SIMON. [*Softly*] He's all right, is Micky.

JUDY. Yes ?

SIMON. He's married, you know.

JUDY. Is he ?

SIMON. The marriage wasn't so good. She was a bitch. . . . Well, Jackie rather helped him not to go gibbering mad.

JUDY. And they're. . . .?

SIMON. [*Irritably, almost*] Why not ? She serves at a tobacconist's. She's not out of the top drawer—but her heart's all right.

JUDY. [*A little bemused*] Well, here's the salt.

SIMON. Good !

JUDY. [*With a little laugh*] And you're just—a budding biologist ?

SIMON. Single minded, that's me. No women come between me and that.

JUDY. [*Gravely*] I think you'll be a very good one.

SIMON. Of course. I'm a genius.

[*He sits, sprawling, his feet up on a chair—stares at her, grinning.*]

JUDY. [*Diffidently*] Now what are you laughing at ?

SIMON. That's a nice smile you've got.

JUDY. [*Curtseying*] " Thank you, sir, she said." [*But still she smiles.*]

SIMON. What's your name ?

JUDY. Judy.

SIMON. Judy . . . Mm. Judy ! [*Begins to chuckle infectiously.*]

JUDY. [*Curiously*] You know, I think you must be a little mad.

SIMON. Are you shy ?

JUDY. I am—rather.

SIMON. [*Gently*] Sorry. Sit down, Judy. You're all right.

[*She sits hesitantly. He winks reassuringly. They are staring at each other, smiling steadily as . . .*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

## ACT I

### SCENE 2

*The same. Three months later. Evening. When the curtain rises,* MICKY *is sketching at a low easel propped on the table. A knock.* MR. MOKE *looks in.*

MICKY. Hullo.

MR. MOKE. Can I come in ?

MICKY. Sure [*Grinning*] Mrs. Moke been after you again ?

MR. MOKE. [*Wearily*] I've got to hide. Fair pursuing me, she is. . . .

MICKY. Poor worm.

MR. MOKE. I'm at the end of my tether.

MICKY. Don't say that.

MR. MOKE. It's the honest truth—I'm a desperate man ! Something's going to blow up soon—and if that woman doesn't take care, I'm going to manhandle her.

MICKY. Oh, you brute.

MR. MOKE. [*Harassed*] I ask you—can a man keep his self-respect when a woman dogs him, day and night ? Dogs me, she does—like an 'awk ! [*Sits*] It's " Moke, do this," and " Moke, do that." I'm a menial—a skivvy—I'm a cipher in my own house. The things that woman does to me would make you come out in goose pimples with 'orror. [*Beating his chest*] I'm a man ! And I've got to stand up for myself !

MICKY. [*Airily*] That's fine. [*He has not stopped working during this.*]

MR. MOKE. It's come to something when I've got to creep in here for sanctuary. . . . Look at me !

MICKY. What for ?

MR. MOKE. [*Insistently*] Just take a look. Do you know

what I am ? I'm the result of evolution—it's taken a couple of million years of work to make me out of a monkey. . . . And now I'm asking you—was it worth it ?

MICKY. I'm busy, my lad. . . .

MR. MOKE. [*Emotionally*] What is she, anyway ? Just rib number five ! . . . She says to me, " Moke, I don't like the way you part your 'air." I says, " I've got no 'air." And she comes back at me bitter-like, " That's just it ! " . . . What can you do with a woman like that ?

[SIMON *enters*.]

SIMON. [*Morosely—at no one in particular*] Wring her neck.

MR. MOKE. [*Pleadingly*] Will you two boys take me out and get me a bit 'alf seas over to-night ?

MICKY. What for ?

MR. MOKE. Just get me nice and rocky on my feet. Then when she starts provoking me, I'll come back at her with a couple of snappy answers that'll burn her tonsils out. . . . [*Passionately*] Well, I'm going to stand up for myself ! I'm going to put my feet apart . . . like this . . . and answer her back ! I'm going to say. . . .

[*In the same breath, feebly, as* MRS. MOKE *appears in the doorway*.]

Yes, Maisie, the groceries. . . .

[MRS. MOKE *exits*. MR. MOKE *follows her*.]

MICKY, SIMON. [*Chuckling together*] Maisie !

[SIMON *crosses to the settee, lies down. He picks up a book.* MICKY *watches him steadily for a little while*.]

MICKY. Been far ?

SIMON. Just walking around.

MICKY. Why ?

SIMON. Oh . . . just to clear my head.

MICKY. You look done in. Working hard ?

SIMON. Done too much to-day.

MICKY. [*Leaves easel*] Well, I suppose flesh and blood'll stand only so much. [*Sits*] Can I borrow a fag ?

[*No answer*.]

I said—can I borrow a fag ?

SIMON. Here. [*Throwing packet.*]

MICKY. You don't seem to hear so well these days.

SIMON. Eh ?

MICKY. Skip that one, too. [*Puffing*] You look a bit down to-night.

[SIMON *looks at him—almost truculantly, now.*]

Oh. Am I being tactless ?

SIMON. Shut up, Micky.

MICKY. [*With a studied indifference*] I don't know that I will Judy been in yet ?

SIMON. No.

MICKY. She hasn't been looking her merry self, either, these last few weeks. [*Looking at* SIMON *fixedly*] Simon—don't—be—a—fool.

SIMON. And what do you mean by that ?

MICKY. I mean there's no room for a girl in a bright young scientist's life.

SIMON. You're very bright.

MICKY. [*Earnestly*] Simon—talk things over.

SIMON. With you ?

MICKY. Why not ? . . . We've been pretty close. This business between you and Judy—it's been on my chest for weeks.

SIMON. There's nothing to talk about—yet.

MICKY. But there's going to be—isn't there ?

SIMON. I don't know. . . .

MICKY. Simon . . . don't let her come between us.

SIMON. [*Uneasily*] Don't put it like that !

MICKY. We've been so contented and happy—don't let her bust things up.

SIMON. That's not fair. . . . I need her.

MICKY. Do you ?

SIMON [*Desperately*] I'm human, dammit—I'm not made of clay ! . . . I—hell ! I can't tell you, Micky ! Try to understand and help me—that's all.

MICKY. Don't I mean anything ?

SIMON. You do. You always will.

MICKY. And you want me to clear out of the way ?

SIMON. I don't know. . . .

MICKY. What *do* you want, old son ? . . . Are you going to ask her to marry you ?

SIMON. I can't !

MICKY. You'll ruin yourself if you do. . . . [*Ruefully*] All right. I'll help. It's coming, all right. . . . [*With an effort at a laugh*] Now snap out of it, son ! I've sold some cartoons !

SIMON. How much ?

MICKY. Five lubbly guineas !

SIMON. [*Surprised*] Good boy !

MICKY. [*Rubbing his hands*] And the fool says there's no God. So I took the liberty of ordering some elegant eats —Judy and Peter are bringing 'em up. How about a leg-show after the orgy ?

SIMON. [*Grinning now*] All right, Micky.

MICKY. [*Rapturously*] Non-stop revue for me ! Plenty of fore-and-aft and a good two and a tanner's worth of opera glass !

SIMON. Does Moke know you've got money ?

MICKY. No.

SIMON. [*Swiftly*] Keep it dark.

MICKY. [*Righteously*] Of course. No sense in *flinging* money away on debts. . . .!

SIMON. Now how about two bob ? [*Holds out hand.*]

MICKY. What for ?

SIMON. [*Grimly*] Hand over. You've been bathing for a month at my expense.

MICKY. [*Injured*] I thought you liked me to be fragrant [*Giving.*]

SIMON. And you might control yourself during the show. You know what happens when *you* set eyes on a chorus girl. . . .

MICKY. [*Slapping* SIMON *girlishly—then collapsing into his arms*] Oh, Mr. Revel, you're too *awful* for words. . . .!

[PETER *and* JUDY *enter. They carry bundles of paper bags,* PETER *has a bottle stuck under his arm.*]

PETER. [*Jovially*] Here we are !

MICKY. [*Eagerly*] Did you get the tongue ?

JUDY. Yes. [*She looks at* SIMON *covertly.*]

MICKY. And the kippers ? And the . . . My God. What's that ? [*Staring, fascinated, at bottle under* PETER'S *arm.*]

PETER. [*Nervously*] Look here, Micky, you said you wanted to celebrate—so I sprang six bob of yours on a bottle of fizz.

MICKY. [*Horrified*] You what ?

JUDY. It looks good fizz. . . .

MICKY. Hell and damnation, what do you think this is ? The Ritz-Astoria ? Six hard-earned bob on champagne. . . . Guinness is my limit !

PETER. Don't be a tight-wad.

MICKY. [*Fingering bottle limply*] There goes the sweat of my brow. Where's my change ?

PETER. Don't you trust me ?

MICKY. [*Firmly*] Gimme. [PETER *gives him.*]

JUDY. Now clear the table, Simon ! All your books. . . . Light the stove, Micky !

MICKY. [*Wiping forehead*] Champagne. . . . [*Totters into kitchen.*]

JUDY. Get the tin-opener, Peter. Micky ! [MICKY *re-appears from kitchen*] We'll need four glasses !

MICKY. I'll try Mrs. Moke. We've only got two.

[*A knock.* MRS. MOKE *comes in.*]

Ah, Cleopatra herself. . . .

[*But something in her face seems to sober him : he stares at her intensely for a moment.*]

What is it ?

MRS. MOKE. [*Tonelessly*] Somebody downstairs wants to talk to you.

MICKY. Who is it ?
MRS. MOKE. You know.
MICKY. My wife ?
MRS. MOKE. Who else.

[MICKY *sighs*. JUDY *and* PETER *catch* SIMON'S *eye—he beckons them out.*]

PETER. [*Awkwardly*] Perhaps, later. . . .
JUDY. Come along, Peter.

[*They exit.*]

MICKY. [*To* MRS. MOKE] What does she want ?
MRS. MOKE. [*Grimly*] That depends on how much you've got.
SIMON. [*Savagely to* MICKY] Do you have to give her money every time she comes. . . .?
MICKY. I must. [*To* MRS. MOKE] Give her this. [*Gives* MRS. MOKE notes] Is there—anybody with her ?
MRS. MOKE. A man.

[*A pause.*]

MICKY. The same as last time. . . .?
MRS. MOKE. You know yourself. It's a different one every time.
MICKY. [*Tiredly*] Oh. That's all.

[MRS. MOKE *exits.*]

SIMON. [*With an effort*] Never mind, old dear.

[MICKY *does not reply.*]

Let's have that fizz. It'll buck you up.
MICKY. All right, Simon.
SIMON. I'll get Judy and Peter up.
MICKY. [*Beginning with a little laugh*] Do you think I'm daft ?
SIMON. About Carol ?
MICKY. Yes.
SIMON. No—I don't think you're daft. Just pathetic.
MICKY. I'm pathetic, all right.
SIMON. Now can I call Judy and Peter ?
MICKY. Simon—I ought to hate her like hell. But she's

crawled all over my heart. I think I'll have to love her until I die. Well, where's that fizz ? [*Rousing himself.*]

SIMON. Here we are.

MICKY. [*Forcing a grin*] Open it, come on ! Don't stand fondling it !

[*The cork goes with a pop*—MICKY *leaps for the gush with a glass.*]

You fool—ninepennyworth all over the table. . . .

SIMON. Catch it quickly, you ass. . . .

MICKY. [*Gurgling*] Let it drip in my mouth !

[*Gets into a fierce contortion to catch the overflow—as* JACKIE *comes in.* JACKIE *is about twenty-three. In a thin and rather nervous way, she is pretty. Her face is all intense eyes. She fumbles in the doorway.*]

SIMON. Jackie ?

MICKY. [*Harshly*] Who asked you to come here ?

SIMON. Micky, don't be a swine. . . .

MICKY. I thought I told you never to come in here.

JACKIE. [*Palely*] I knocked. You didn't hear.

MICKY. Well ?

SIMON. [*Sniffing sharply, going to kitchen*] You left that stove alight—it's burning like stink.

MICKY. [*As if to restrain him*] Simon !

SIMON. [*Fiercely*] No. Shut up ! [*Exits.*]

JACKIE. I had to look for you. I saw—her—come here.

MICKY. Carol ?

JACKIE. I thought. . . .

MICKY. Well, what ?

JACKIE. [*Bursting into a flood of tears*] Oh, Micky, I can't help it—why doesn't she leave you alone. . . .

MICKY. What's it got to do with you ?

JACKIE. [*Kneeling, holding his hands*] Oh, Micky . . . what does she want of you ?

MICKY. That's my affair.

JACKIE. [*Looking up at him through her tears*] It's funny, isn't it ? She's wicked—and you love her like hell. And

I'd give my heart for you—and you can't feel a thing. . . .

MICKY. I'm fond of you, Jackie.

JACKIE. That's something, anyway.

MICKY. Now wipe your eyes.

[*She does so, puts her head tiredly on his lap.*]

JACKIE. [*Softly*] Don't be angry with me.

MICKY. All right.

JACKIE. She doesn't want you to—go back to her. . . .?

MICKY. No.

JACKIE. [*Pathetically*] I could give you so much. It's wasted I suppose. I keep hoping someday you'll begin to feel about me like I feel about you. . . . So I just keep on hoping.

MICKY. [*Strugglingly*] Well, don't.

JACKIE. I'm made like that, Micky.

MICKY. [*Savagely*] You fool. You can't love somebody because you want to. I've told you the truth. I'll never have anything left over for you but what I've got now.

JACKIE. [*Naively*] Well, I'll have to be satisfied.

MICKY. I'll see you home.

JACKIE. [*Getting up*] You forgive me for coming here?

MICKY. Of course.

JACKIE. Kiss me, then.

MICKY. [*Roughly*] Stupid. [*Kisses her fondly—wipes her eyes with his own handkerchief.*]

JACKIE. [*With a great sigh—linking his arm tightly*] It's something just to be near you. . . . Are my eyes awfully red?

MICKY. No.

JACKIE. All right. Let's go.

[SIMON *has come back from the kitchen on the cue, "eyes red?"—as* MICKY *and* JACKIE *go,* JUDY *appears in the doorway from the landing.*]

MICKY. [*Avoiding* JUDY'S *eyes*] Shan't be long, Judy. Hang on.

[MICKY *and* JACKIE *exit.*]

SIMON. If there's anything more wearying than one emotional scene—it's two blasted emotional scenes.

JUDY. Is that Jackie ?

SIMON. Yes.

JUDY. She looks—sweet.

SIMON. [*Morosely*] What did you think she was ? A film star vamp ?

JUDY. You're not awfully good-tempered this evening, are you ?

SIMON. [*Sitting, not looking at her*] Don't be silly, Judy.

JUDY. But you're not.

SIMON. I don't have to be bubbling with jollity all the time.

JUDY. [*Sighing*] I suppose I'd better go.

[*Goes* R *slowly.*]

If you're not busy later—I'll be downstairs. . . .

SIMON. [*Crudely*] Well, I shall be busy.

JUDY. [*Rather pathetically*] Oh, Simon.

[*Pause.*]

SIMON. [*Wearily*] Look. Come back, Judy : Let's have it out.

JUDY. I want to, Simon.

SIMON. [*Almost breathlessly*] I'm so damn chock full of everything—I can't be still. It's playing hell with my nerves. . . .

JUDY. And what do you think it's doing to me ?

SIMON. Oh. You feel—that much, too ?

JUDY. More—I think.

SIMON. [*Curiously*] Well . . . what ought I to do ?

JUDY. [*Damply*] I think you might come here.

[SIMON *crosses to her, gripping her arms.*]

SIMON. Oh, Judy.

JUDY. Kiss me, you fool.

[*He kisses her. For a moment they are queerly still, clutched together. Then he relaxes.*]

SIMON. I've been so damn rude to you these last few weeks.

JUDY. Do you think I didn't know what it was ?

SIMON. Sometimes I've wanted to cry—and sometimes I've wanted to hurt you, to hurt myself. . . .

JUDY. I love you, Simon.

SIMON. Yes, I love you, too, Judy. And I know now I always shall.

JUDY. Well, what next, Simon ?

SIMON. Oh, just let's stay like this. . . .

JUDY. It won't do, Simon.

SIMON. [*With an effort*] No, I suppose it won't.

JUDY. [*Intensely*] I've been worrying myself sick. I knew it would come—in a burst like this. I've been trying to plan exactly what to say. And now it's come—I still don't know what.

SIMON. It's driving me crazy. . . .

JUDY. It musn't any more. You've got to work.

SIMON. [*Drably*] Yes, hell of a lot of work I've been getting done.

JUDY. [*Gently*] All your future's wrapped up in that. Let's think clearly, dear.

SIMON. [*Getting up*] Can *you* think clearly ?

JUDY. You mean. . . .

SIMON. [*Aggressively*] Yes, this is what I mean. What's the usual thing now ? I ought to say, marry me, ducky, and let the wedding bells peal ! Well, I can go on asking you to marry me until the cows come home. . . . And do you know when my cows come home ? I've got a scholarship and two quid a week until I pass—that may be two years, and then maybe a job. . . . And maybe not. . . . And if I do get a job, it'll be love and dripping until I get really going. . . . Yes, it'll come, but it won't come quick. Judy—I've got all my life mapped out ! I can't smash it now !

JUDY. It would be cruel if anything did.

SIMON. You do see, don't you ?

JUDY. Yes, dear. I see.

SIMON. [*Viciously*] So if we had any damned sense, we'd. . . .

JUDY. [*Near to tears*] Are you going to talk rot ?

SIMON. Eh ?

JUDY. Don't let's have any blasted heroics. You're not a gentleman and I don't want to see you as one. Don't act the martyr ! I love you because you're you—because you're pigheaded and weak and sometimes you're daft. But you've fought so hard to make yourself—why won't you fight for me ?

SIMON. What do you mean by that ?

JUDY. [*Strainedly*] Simon—would you think me crude if I asked you : do you ever think of me in a sort of. . . .

SIMON. [*Wryly*] . . . physical way ? Yes. I do.

JUDY. You can't help it, can you ?

SIMON. No.

JUDY. Neither can I.

SIMON. We're getting frank now, aren't we ?

JUDY. And that's how we should be.

SIMON. [*Humourlessly*] Don't be a blazing fool, Judy. I can't offer you anything.

JUDY. You will someday.

SIMON. And until then ?

JUDY. We'll take each other good and properly on trust. I'm not afraid.

SIMON. [*Strugglingly*] Judy — do you trust me that much ?

JUDY. Seems I love you that much.

SIMON. I want you like hell . . . but it'll be hard for you—I mean, if things should ever go wrong. . . .

JUDY. You blithering ass ! Shut up !

SIMON. Judy. [*Holding her.*]

JUDY. [*Passionately*] We've got to be sensible ! Think sensible !

SIMON. [*Brokenly*] I can't think at all, ducky. . . .

JUDY. We can't be prim and proper and have all the

orange-blossom and wedding-bells and stuff. . . . [*Pathetically*] I would like it, Simon. But it's not for us yet. Your life comes first. Simon !—I'm not going to burden you with responsibility and a wife when you're fighting so hard. . . . So let's be honest !

SIMON. All right.

JUDY. [*Half laughing sorrowfully*] Only when you can afford a wedding ring—think of me before some other hussy, won't you, dear ?

SIMON. [*Kissing her*] I will.

JUDY. Poor Simon . . . with two pounds a week, you won't be proud, will you ?—you'll let me help ?

SIMON. Help ?

JUDY. I must ! You must let me pay my share.

SIMON. I hate that. . . .

JUDY. I shan't feel honest if I don't. . . . [*Holding up his face*] No doubts ?

SIMON. Not one.

JUDY. And you don't think I'm—wanton ?

SIMON. I think you're sweet. [*A pause—then eagerly*] We know we're doing right. . . .

JUDY. [*Earnestly*] All we've got to do is trust each other.

SIMON. Better than. . . .

JUDY. . . . just because you can't afford a ring.

[*They have been babbling these last lines hurriedly, almost, as if to re-assure each other ; now they sit, hands clutched, staring breathlessly.*]

SIMON. [*Releasing her*] Well, we've about convinced each other. When do you start house-keeping here ?

JUDY. Right away.

SIMON. Micky'll have to go.

JUDY [*Regretfully*] Poor old Micky.

SIMON. He's got the room upstairs. He won't mind. Then there's your brother.

JUDY. He'll have to be told.

SIMON. He'll make a stink.

JUDY. Then he'll—just make a stink. I feel limp now, Simon.

[MICKY *enters.*]

MICKY. [*Cheerfully*] Well, p'raps the party can proceed ! [*Luxuriously, dangling a fish*] Kippers and beer ! What a lubbly spread. . . . Hullo. [*Looking at them steadily*] Have I butted in on something ?

SIMON. [*Taking* JUDY'S *arm*] Look, Micky. Don't ask too many questions. Would you be a pal and sort of move your things upstairs ?

MICKY. Anybody moving in ?

JUDY. [*Bravely*] I am.

MICKY. Oh. I see. [*Pausing*] Permanently, like ?

JUDY. Sort of.

MICKY. With or without blessing of church ?

JUDY. [*Still bravely*] Until Simon can stand on his own feet—sort of without.

MICKY. Sort of without. . . . [*Turning away*] Well—there's nothing for me to say.

SIMON. Micky.

MICKY. [*Depressed*] I'll shift. All right. [*Goes to door.*]

SIMON. Don't do it like that.

JUDY. It makes me feel such an utter pig. . . . Micky—don't you want me to help him ?

MICKY. [*Intensely*] Who can help him most—you or I ?

JUDY. [*Staunchly*] I really believe—I can.

MICKY. You think you'll be better for him ?

JUDY. Yes.

MICKY. You'll find out, you're wrong. . . .

SIMON. Micky—shut up.

MICKY. It's all right. . . . No hard feelings, pal.

JUDY. You must *hate* me for this.

MICKY. Rot.

JUDY. We can both be your friends.

MICKY. [*Drily*] Sure. . . . Does that young brother of yours know ?

JUDY. Not yet.

MICKY. He's going to go up in a rush of flame. Keep out of his way, ducky, or you'll get your beard singed. . . . D'you know what he's doing now ?

JUDY. No.

MICKY. Sitting in his room, staring at the wall, all pale and horrified. . . . After my little disaster—he's wondering what sort of a frowsy lot he's got mixed up with.

SIMON. Micky. . . .

MICKY. [*Gently*] Don't worry about me. [*Waving to food and bottles*] Well—this sort of makes a wedding feast, doesn't it ?

JUDY. Don't joke, Micky.

MICKY. [*Filling a glass*] Am I joking ? [*Queerly*] P'raps if I hadn't come a mucker over my little dash at matrimony—I might feel like a joke. . . . No, I'm serious for once. [*Drinks—with a false jauntiness*] God bless you, my children. And see that none of your troubles are—little ones. . . . Now how about me talking to that brother of yours ?

SIMON. I'd like to tell him. . . .

MICKY. We'll all tell him ! Have him up now.

JUDY. [*Nervously*] No—not yet. . . .

MICKY. [*Going to door, bellowing down*] Peter !

JUDY. [*Trying to laugh*] Do you know—I'm terribly afraid of him. . . .

MICKY. [*Roaring vulgarly*] Eh ? No, not you, Mrs. Moke. . . . Get out of earshot ! Peter ! . . . Well, come up ! [*Back centre*] The infant prodigy's coming up.

JUDY. [*Pathetically*] We're just trying to be sensible, Micky.

MICKY. Stick to your guns.

JUDY. [*Suddenly*] No—I can't bear to face him now. . . .

[*She exits hurriedly into kitchen.* PETER *enters.*]

PETER. Everything all right—for the party ?

MICKY. How d'you mean, everything all right ?

PETER. Well—after that spot of awkwardness. . . .

MICKY. Don't get personal with me. Sit down. [PETER *sits centre*] We're going to ask you for something.

PETER. What ?

MICKY. Advice.

[SIMON *sits now, watching them intently.*]

PETER. Well—if I can help. . . .

MICKY. [*Affectionately*] We need a big brain like yours. Like a drink ?

PETER. [*Cheerfully*] Thanks. [MICKY *pours out and gives him.*]

MICKY. Nice and comfortable in that chair ? [*Evidently out to establish a sort of good-humoured confidence.*]

PETER. Fine, thanks.

MICKY. Good ! Now I suppose you're wondering why I called you up ?

PETER. I am, rather.

MICKY. Well, we've got a problem on hand. Bit of a stinker, too. I'd like to get your angle on it.

PETER. Why ?

MICKY. [*Exaggeratedly*] You've got me, pal. . . . [*Continuing amiably*] To cut the kidding—it's what's known as a problem of struggling youth. And being a bit of the flaming spirit of youth yourself. . . .

PETER. [*Genially*] Thanks very much.

MICKY. Well—pal of ours is in a jam. . . .

PETER. Do I know him ?

MICKY. [*Patiently*] Does it matter ? He's young—ambitious—got a glowing career ahead of him. Someday, we'll hear big things of him. . . . Just now, he's struggling through college. That soaked in ?

PETER. Yes.

MICKY. [*Warmly*] Good ! . . . Now in walks Girl.

PETER. Go on.

MICKY. She's good and decent. Well, so is he. He's got nothing to give her but *luv*. [*Pregnantly*] And you know what *luv* does to you. . . .

PETER. All right . . . Go on.

MICKY. [*Intensely*] Between you and me and the gatepost, my lad—youth isn't always the springtime it's cracked up to be. There are all sorts of problems cropping up that don't look nice in print. And when a man's working hard—driving his brain at high pitch—he can't afford to fret himself . . . with nature, I mean.

PETER. I understand.

MICKY. Do you—really ?

PETER. I'm not sweating *my* way through life—but nature takes your mind off a lot of things.

MICKY. [*Smiling*] You're an understanding young bloke. How old are you—seventy ?

PETER. Sixty.

MICKY. You must have seen so much. . . . Well, I'm trying to give you a picture of the sort of things that distracts a chap when a decent girl comes between him and his work. Try to get me . . . it's serious.

PETER. I know.

MICKY. Well, what ought they to do ? Set up housekeeping in an unconventional way—or go on starving for each other nobly until they've got enough money to get decently spliced ?

PETER. You mean—should they live together—without. . . .

MICKY. The ring. Man, you're bright. . . . Well, what d'you say ?

PETER. I believe in being modern.

MICKY. I'm so happy, Mr. Stevens.

PETER. [*With a fine sophistication*] I'm not one of those old-fashioned people with musty ideas. You can't be Victorian nowadays. . . .

MICKY. [*Gently*] Get off the pulpit, lad ! Say yes or no.

PETER. Will they get married when they can afford to. . . .?

MICKY. Right away. If the thing works out.

PETER. Then I'd say damn convention—and good luck to 'em.

MICKY. [*Admiringly*] You know, I wouldn't have thought it of you.

PETER. [*Smiling*] No ?

MICKY. Young pillar of respectability like you ? . . . Give us your fin ! [*Shakes* PETER's *hand warmly. To* SIMON :] So that's all right !

PETER. What do you mean ?

MICKY. You're not going to be dumb, Peter ?

PETER. [*Curiously*] You weren't talking about my sister ?

MICKY. You're damn thickheaded if you think I wasn't.

PETER. You rotten swine.

MICKY. Changing your tune, eh ?

SIMON. We've talked it over. . . .

PETER. [*Furiously*] Shut up !

MICKY. [*Holding* PETER] That'll do, now. . . .
PETER. Take your hands off me. } [*together.*]
SIMON. Don't shout, for God's sake. . . .

MICKY. [*Mildly*] Listen, son ! You can use your eyes and see what's plain. Simon's working hard and it's distracting him like hell . . . that he needs Judy bad. Students aren't monks and if you think you can work when you're all burned up . . . well, you know what I mean.

PETER. Is that the only excuse ?

MICKY. Why shouldn't they comfort each other—until they can put things right ? It'll be good for both of 'em. . . .

PETER. Where's Judy ?

MICKY. Steady, now . . . wait till you've cooled down. . . .

PETER. [*Fiercely*] Where is she ?

[*Moves hurriedly to door—as* JUDY *enters from kitchen.*]

Is it true—[*looking at* SIMON *savagely*]—that you and he. . . .?

[*He sees her answer in her face.*]

Judy—you must be mad !

JUDY. Oh, Peter—try to understand. . . .

PETER. He's fooling you.

JUDY. Is he ? Perhaps I started it.

PETER. You couldn't be so cheap.

JUDY. But still I did.

MICKY. Now have you got hold of yourself. . . .?

PETER. [*Shaking himself free*] Let go of me ! What's the idea of this, Judy ?

JUDY. Peter—it's so hard to explain when you're blazing like that.

PETER. [*Passionately*] Can't you tell me, damn you ? . . . Why can't you get married now ?

MICKY. On what ?

PETER. Don't give me any damned—excuses. . . .

JUDY. [*Fierily*) And I won't saddle him with a wife—when he's struggling like that !

PETER. [*Shouting*] And what'll father say ?

JUDY. He needn't know.

SIMON. [*Wearily*] If I could get a word in edgeways. . . .

PETER. You rotter. . . .

MICKY. Hold on !

PETER. A lot of damned loose-livers. That's what you are. [*Incoherently*] All you think of. . . . all you want. . . .

[*Leaps on* SIMON *violently*. MICKY *seizes his arms—tearing them apart.*]

JUDY. Peter !

MICKY. Steady, now !

PETER. [*Relaxing weakly—turning away*] All right. Let me go now. [MICKY *releases him.*]

JUDY. [*Emotionally*] Oh, Peter ! Peter !

PETER. [*Miserably*] I'll get out of here.

[*Exits.*]

MICKY. It had to come, you know. I'll look after him.

[*Exits.*]

SIMON. Sorry, Judy.

JUDY. It's a pity, dear.

SIMON. It isn't easy for me to say anything now.

JUDY. I know [*She goes to him*] If we have courage always —and just believe in our two selves. . . . [*Trying to smile*] Don't look like that, darling ! [*Kisses him.*]

SIMON. [*Distressed*] It'll be a long time before I forget the look on that kid's face.

JUDY. [*Enfolding him maternally*] Oh, my dear, my dear. . . .

CURTAIN

# ACT TWO

## SCENE I

*The same. A few months later. Early evening.* SIMON *is working at the table—the welter of papers, microscope, etc., is much as it was at the opening of Act One. He wears the same slippers, loosened shirt, etc.,* JUDY *comes in from kitchen. She wears a business-like apron and carries the tablecloth. The pair have a thoroughly domestic look.*

SIMON. [*Vaguely*] I know ! . . . I won't be long.

JUDY. Supper's almost ready !

SIMON. Good.

JUDY. [*Sitting on table*] Let up now, angel. You've done enough.

SIMON. For God's sake, don't pester me.

JUDY. [*Good humouredly*] All right. I'll babble—you carry on. [*Stroking his hair*] Darling, you use the filthiest grease. . . . Now if you can spare me half an ear. . . .

SIMON. [*Not stopping*] Sure.

JUDY. Supper's—nearly—ready.

SIMON. Fine [*Blinking up*] What——?

JUDY. Liver and. . . .

SIMON. Liver and B ? [*Wrinkling*] What, not again ?

JUDY. Very nourishing !

SIMON. But that makes Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. . . .

JUDY. Don't you want me to learn ?

SIMON. Go ahead ! Practise on my tummy. Shovel out the stuff.

JUDY. Not quite ready.

SIMON. Then if I can carry on and finish. . . ?

JUDY. No, ducky. You've done enough ! [*Kisses him*]

You're going grey, dear. Silver threads amongst the gold. Love me ?

SIMON. [*Amiably*] Madly.

JUDY. Well, couldn't you say it as though it was burning you up ?

[SIMON *seizes her, pulling her down on his lap—he kisses her, clasped in this posture, they roll gently on to the floor.* JUDY, *at length :*]

[*Sighing*] That was a small and exciting bit of heaven. It made my toes wriggle.

SIMON. [*Cheerfully*] Lovie !

[*Pause.*]

JUDY. [*Encouragingly*] Well, go on : short of words ?

SIMON. [*Nuzzling her neck*] I devour you, Delilah ; my hot breath fans your cheek ; I kiss your ravishing ears and I swoon.

JUDY. Dream music. . . .

SIMON. Now get off my lap, you weigh half a ton.

JUDY. You're about as glamorous as a cockroach.

SIMON. Do you want to give me pins and needles in my legs ?

JUDY. You know, you're not unhandsome in a half light. . . .

SIMON. [*Struggling to get up*] I've got some work to do. And I'm getting stiff.

JUDY. Only something went wrong with your nose before they finished it off. [*Fondly*] You're quite the daftest person to be in love with !

SIMON. [*Subsiding wearily*] All right. Get your passion spent, then get off my lap.

JUDY. You look dreadfully tired, dear.

SIMON. I am.

JUDY. [*Softly*] Rings under your eyes. [*Stroking them.*]

SIMON. What did you expect, bracelets round my ears ?

JUDY [*Embracing him tightly*] Oh, I'm sorry for all the women who can't have you, dear !

SIMON. What about being sorry for me with cramp in my legs ? [*Violently*] Roll off ! Come on ! Creasing my trousers and making a fool of me. . . .

[MICKY *looks in—turns up his eyes at the sight and exits. There is a violent knock on the door.* MICKY *re-enters.*]

MICKY. When you've finished your all-in-wrestling—I'd like to remind you, you asked me to supper one night.

SIMON. Come on in.

MICKY. [*Rubbing hands expansively*] Now what can I smell, folks ?

SIMON. [*With relish*] Liver and B.

MICKY. [*Aghast*] Again ?

[*Makes for door with a leap.*]

Oh, God !

SIMON. [*Seizing him*] No, you don't ! Come and share the agony.

JUDY. [*Going to kitchen*] You can always watch me eat it, you know.

[JUDY *exits,* SIMON *and* MICKY *sit.*]

MICKY. Let's have a gasper.

[SIMON *tosses him some cigarettes.*]

[*Gently*] Well, old dear. Don't seem to see so much of you these days. How're things going ?

SIMON. Not bad, Micky.

MICKY. How's Judy ?

SIMON. Not bad, too.

MICKY. You don't seem too sure of it.

SIMON. Of course, I'm sure.

MICKY. Slap me in the eye if I'm saying something wrong—but I had the funny idea that you'd been quarrelling the other day.

SIMON. So what, Micky ?

MICKY. Nothing.

SIMON. Not serious, is it ?

MICKY. Not if I hadn't had the idea the day before—that you'd been quarrelling then, too.

SIMON. Very observant, aren't you?
MICKY. Anything—I can referee?
SIMON. No, Micky.
MICKY. Sure?

[*Pause.*]

SIMON. [*Tiredly*] Well, it's Peter.
MICKY. Oh. The kid brother, eh?
SIMON. He's been coming round lately when I'm out and —and he talks to her.
MICKY. I see.
SIMON. [*With a sudden stifled fury*] I don't know what's come over Judy.
MICKY. Spill it, buddy! Let's hear.
SIMON. We were all right the first few months. Like. . . .
MICKY. . . . two birds in a nest. I know. [*Grinning*] All the billing and cooing fair made me sick. Well, what's wrong now?
SIMON. She's gone so—nervy.
MICKY. You'll settle down!
SIMON. [*Sombrely*] She gets het up at the slightest thing. One minute she's sweet—she was just now—the next she's all on fire. . . . She never was like that. Hell, it's bloody awful at times. I don't know what that brother of hers has been stuffing her with. . . .
MICKY. [*Oddly*] You're not getting tired of each other?
SIMON. [*Simply*] No. It isn't that.
MICKY. And Judy?
SIMON. She hasn't changed that way, either. It's just—her nerves.
MICKY. [*Hurriedly, hearing* JUDY] I'll talk to Peter. See if I can keep him away. . . . Simon, is that *all* that's wrong?
SIMON. [*Obstinately*] That's all.
MICKY. [*Casually*] When do you take your Inter?
SIMON. In two months.
MICKY. [*Evenly*] You're going to fail, my lad.
SIMON. [*Shocked*] What do you mean?

MICKY. I'm not blind—you've not been working. I've talked to Langton—he says you're behind.

SIMON. [*Despairingly*] How the devil can I work, with—with. . . .

MICKY. With what ?

SIMON. Everything. [*Wearily*] I don't know.

MICKY. Aren't you happy with her ?

[SIMON *shrugs.*]

I see. So that's the. . . .

SIMON. [*Turning away*] I know what you're going to say—Well, Micky . . . don't.

MICKY. [*Softly*] Poor old son. [*Pats his arm*] You're not the Simon you used to be.

[JUDY *enters with tray of cutlery, etc.*]

JUDY. When you useless lumps have finished conspiring, p'raps you'll help me with the cloth.

SIMON. [*Hotly, suddenly*] Damn it, Judy, we can talk, can't we ?—without your suggesting. . . .

JUDY. [*Stiffening*] Hullo, hullo ? What's come over you ?

SIMON. I don't like those wisecracks.

JUDY. [*Coldly*] You can lose your manners in front of me—but you might think of Micky.

MICKY. [*Shocked*] Peace, my children ! I'll lay the cloth.

JUDY. [*Looking at* SIMON *curiously*] Ass. [*Exits.*]

[MICKY *slips on an apron.*]

MICKY. Now who's talking about nerves !

SIMON. [*Contritely*] Sorry. It came out in a rush. [*Then urgently*] Micky—look here.

MICKY. What ?

SIMON. There's something else. Don't read this letter now. [*Producing it*] Shove it away. [MICKY *does so*] Remember Laughton ?

MICKY. Your doctor pal ? Sure.

SIMON. He's gone to Naples. He wants me to work at the Marine Laboratory during the vac. Micky—it's a hell of a

chance—he could keep the place warm for me until I pass——

MICKY. Jump at it !

SIMON. Yes ? And—Judy ?

MICKY. She can go, too.

SIMON. No. . . . She can't go. It's been hard enough hiding things from her dad. She couldn't move to Naples without him knowing . . . about us.

MICKY. Oh, I see.

SIMON. [*Intensely*] Micky—I'm dreading telling her !

[MR. MOKE *looks in. He enters with an oddly mysterious air—beckons to* MICKY *and begins to whisper to him furtively.*]

MICKY. [*Aback*] Eh ?

[*Again* MR. MOKE *whispers.*]

Donner and blitzen ! God lumme, if you can't find peace in your own house. . . . How much does he want ?

MR. MOKE. How do I know ?

MICKY. [*Violently*] Strangle him or something. [*Hurrying to window*] I'll hop out on the roof and hide until he's gone. . . .

SIMON. Who is it now ?

MICKY. I've hidden from that damn tailor six months. Now he's found my address. Scandalous, that's what it is ! What some people won't do for bills. . . . [*Turning on* MR. MOKE *ferociously*] How'd he find my address !

MR. MOKE. How do I know ?

MICKY. Couldn't you pay him something,—or something ?—and put it down on the account. . . .?

MR. MOKE. [*Tonelessly*] Gertcha. [*Going.*]

MICKY. [*Seizing* MR. MOKE *by lapels*] Lend me a quid !

MR. MOKE. [*Tittering*] And me that's forgotten what one looks like.

MICKY. Where does Mrs. Moke keep her cash ?

MR. MOKE. Eh ?

MICKY. Go and dip in her apron. . . . [*Pushing him to door*] Go on !

MR. MOKE. 'Ere. 'Ere. Compounding a felony. . . .

MICKY. [*Fiercely*] I'd rob for you, wouldn't I ?

MR. MOKE. No.

MICKY. No, well, p'raps you're right. [*Sibilantly*] Suicide. That's what. If ever a bloke saw a clear way out. . . .

SIMON. Shut up ! Give him ten bob on account.

[MICKY *throws a falsetto swoon into* MR. MOKE'S *arms*.]

I mean I'll lend it you.

MICKY. Eh ? Oh, no.

SIMON. Here. [*Fishing out and giving him*] Grab it quick.

MICKY. [*Curiously touched*] Oh, no—those old domestic days are gone. . . .

SIMON. Go on—before he comes up here.

MICKY. [*Maudlin, kissing* SIMON] What a pal ! I'll remember this in heaven. . . . [*Pushing* MR. MOKE *out of the way, darting out*] Get out of the way, Tinribs ! [*Exits*.]

[MR. MOKE *shrugs, winks to* SIMON.]

MR. MOKE. [*Happily*] Like old times, ain't it? [*Hurries out*.]

[JUDY *comes in with plates*.]

JUDY. Where's Micky ?

SIMON. [*Chuckling*] Gone down to the door. His tailor's smelled him out. [*Skipping to the landing eagerly*] Here, I'm going to listen to this . . .!

JUDY. Simon, you didn't lend him——?

SIMON. Yes. I lent him ten bob.

JUDY. [*Harshly*] You shouldn't have done that. You can't afford it.

SIMON. He always pays back.

JUDY. I—I daresay. Still, it makes for shoddy habits. Micky's getting just too careless lately. . . .

SIMON. [*Violently*] JUDY !

JUDY. What ?

SIMON. Stop picking on Micky ! He's the best friend you've got !

JUDY. [*Pausing*] Yes . . . Yes, I suppose he is. [*In a low voice*] I'm sorry, Simon.

SIMON. Never mind.

JUDY. Simon . . . I'm sorry, too, about before. I don't know what's come over me.

[SIMON *stares at her : then he crosses, takes her quietly in his arms.*]

SIMON. Forget it, lovie. I started it.

JUDY. [*Shakily*] But I do rub you up so awfully. . . .

SIMON. Kiss me [*Dabs her eyes.*]

JUDY. [*Kissing him falteringly*] Just slap me when I go off again. [*Blows her nose*] Now—supper !

[*They go on laying the table where* MICKY *left off.*]

You know what Micky said last week ? . . . He said we were built to be the happiest couple alive.

SIMON. Man's probably ignorant or daft.

JUDY. We don't do so badly, though.

SIMON. [*Vaguely*] Not so bad.

JUDY. Even if we do let off steam sometimes.

SIMON. [*Genially*] A bust-up a day keeps the divorce-court away.

JUDY. [*Cheerfully*] Not your tactful evening, is it, duck ? We'd never need a divorce-court, dear. . . . Could you chuck your pipe on to the other side of your mouth ? It's got such a stench. . . . And lay the spoons like this. I suppose we're tolerant, that's what. We know each other's weaknesses.

SIMON. S'right.

JUDY. You know mine are plums and pastries and Sunday breakfasts in bed, and I know yours are stinking pipes and tea like beer and fluffy roguish blondes.

SIMON. Who, me ? [*Laughs*] Oh, no !

JUDY. [*Sweetly*] I suppose it'd be nicer to forget that yellow-haired Czech you met at the Prom. last week.

SIMON. [*Not struck by her humour*] She wasn't a Czech. She was a Lapp.

JUDY. A what ?

SIMON. [*Patiently*] She came from Lapland.

JUDY. How very cute ! Did she eat candles ? . . .

SIMON. [*With a sharp look at her, goes to door*] Micky ! Come up ! We're going to be late !

JUDY. Late ?

SIMON. [*returning*] I'm going on a pub-crawl with the lads.

JUDY. I thought you said you mightn't go.

SIMON. Well, I am going. I need a rest.

JUDY. Don't you—rest—with me ?

SIMON. [*wearily*] All right, have it that way : I need a change.

JUDY. Doesn't my company attract you any more ?

SIMON. Now that's being selfish. I can ease up with the boys.

JUDY. I've never noticed you being particularly stiff with me. Simon, don't go.

SIMON. But I want to go.

JUDY. And I'm asking you not to.

SIMON. Judy ! What's the matter with you ? If I can't get out sometimes. . . .

JUDY. [*Flaring*] I don't like your friends—a lot of medical students and ruffians—and you'll come home squiffy. . . .

SIMON. [*Firmly*] I'll most certainly come home squiffy.

JUDY. [*Cattishly*] Do you think I want you creeping back reeking of drink ?

SIMON. [*Evenly*] I haven't been drunk for three months or more. I've been working hard and I'm due to relax. I'm going out on the binge and get roaring drunk—I'm going to tipple in every pub that'll give me credit—and I know twelve of 'em. But I'm going to get a lot of restlessness out of my system and settle down to work again. . . . You can put my camp-bed in the kitchen : Then you won't have to smell my beer.

JUDY. [*Coolly*] So I've married a potential tippler.

SIMON. [*Stiffly*] I beg your pardon ?

JUDY. All right, I'm considering marrying one. . . .

SIMON. You're taking a lot for granted.

JUDY. Simon—don't talk like that to me !

SIMON. I'm not going to give up my men friends. You don't own me yet. So stick to your bargain !

JUDY. Bargain !

SIMON. We took each other on trust. And if you don't like it. . . .

JUDY. [*Frightened*] Simon !

SIMON. I'd have to be a saint to put up with your tricks ! What's come over you lately ? It's nag, nag, nag. . . .

JUDY. I've got the right. . . .

SIMON. You've got no rights !

JUDY. So you want to be rid of me ?

SIMON. [*Wearily*] For heaven's sake, let up on me. . . .

JUDY. [*Palely*] When I look at you now—I hardly know you. You're not the Simon I first met.

SIMON. Because you're getting to know me.

JUDY. And I'm not damned well impressed.

SIMON. [*Sardonically*] No ? Now is that so ?

JUDY. And don't come the outraged hero over me. . . .

SIMON. [*Gripping her shoulders*] Listen to me. You're too damned romantic. You've lived and eaten with me for five months now and you're seeing what I really am. I've got little habits you don't like. Eh ? . . . You don't like my pals, you don't like my snore, you don't like my clothes. Well, I'm what I *am!* I like my habits—I've had 'em longer than you—and I'm sticking to 'em ! You want to change me and monopolise me . . . you want to stick to me like glue. And you're not going to ! You can take me as I am—or leave me. . . .

JUDY. You rotter.

SIMON. [*Ironically*] Well, we're getting the rough edges of matrimony now. Perhaps it's as well we didn't get too tightly tied up.

JUDY. [*Tremulously*] That's a swinish thing to say.

SIMON. Fine !

JUDY. We're certainly getting down to hard tacks now.

SIMON. [*Menacingly*] So I'll tell you one or two things I don't like about you. [*Towering over her*] You can't cook. You can't talk. You're a country mouse trying to be cute. You're a snob and you're a prig—and I don't like the way you gulp your tea. Yes—gulp your tea ! Now you can keep your liver and bacon. . . .

JUDY. Simon !

SIMON. Because if anyone shows me that damned dish again—by God—I'll slap it back ! [*Tearing his hair*] Oh, hell ! . . . You're driving me nuts ! [*Flings out.*]

[*For a few moments—and a little too dramatically and emotionally*—JUDY *stares after him. Then she sits limply, her face blank and rather frightened. There is a knock.* JUDY *rouses herself sharply and goes to the door.* JACKIE *stands in the doorway.*]

JUDY. Oh !

[JACKIE *gives a quick nervous look around the room.*]

JACKIE. I was looking for Micky. I knocked upstairs. There's no reply.

JUDY. [*With a faint smile*] He's destroying his tailor. He'll be back quite soon. He's having supper here.

JACKIE. Don't tell him I came down.

JUDY. Why ever not. . . .

JACKIE. I don't think he likes me to mix with you.

JUDY. But how absurd ! Won't you come in ? Micky's never really given me a chance to meet you. . . .

JACKIE. [*Looking at* JUDY *drably*] I don't know that he'd like me to.

JUDY. But, of course, he would. Do come in.

[JACKIE *does not advance beyond the doorway—where she stands, endeavouring to assume a jauntiness she does not possess.*]

JACKIE. Where's your boy-friend ?

JUDY. You mean, my . . .?

JACKIE. I know what he is. There are no flies on me.

JUDY. [*Still smiling*] Then won't you still come in ?

JACKIE. [*Resentfully*] Perhaps I shouldn't—I'm not your class, you know.

JUDY. That's stupid.

JACKIE. Oh, no, it isn't. I used to get a funny feeling up here . . . [*with a little strangled motion to her throat*] . . . when I thought Micky wouldn't like me to mix with you. I can feel humiliated, too.

JUDY. I'm awfully sorry.

JACKIE. I'll bet you are. [*Wryly*] Not that I've got anything against Micky. I know him through and through. He's just part of me. [*Hatefully*] But I don't think much of you.

JUDY. Please. . . .

JACKIE. I may be—what I am—but what are you ?

JUDY. I'll have to close the door. . . .

JACKIE [*With a harsh sob*] I've got my feelings, too. I'd give Micky a mouthful . . . if I wasn't so soft on him. But you—you can get away with it. . . .

JUDY. I think you're overwrought.

JACKIE. You never mind what I am. You may be hoity-toity and well-bred and class—but you're no better than I am !

JUDY. I'm beginning to believe it.

JACKIE. [*Viciously*] You're living with a man—give it any fancy name you like—but if a working girl like me does as much—I'm a tart ! I ought to say that to Micky. . . . [*Her voice fades*] Only I won't. . . .

JUDY. No.

JACKIE. [*Pathetically*] I daren't. I said I was soft on him.

JUDY. [*Whispering*] There's somebody coming up.

JACKIE. [*Sighing*] Perhaps I've said too much. I don't know what I'm saying these days.

JUDY. [*Dimly*] You said just enough.

JACKIE. I wouldn't have said it if it hadn't come out in a rush.

JUDY. It doesn't matter now. . . .

JACKIE. You won't tell Micky ?

JUDY. No.

JACKIE. Don't even tell him I came . . . [*with an effort*] and I apologise.

[MRS. MOKE *appears. She carries a bulky shopping bag.*]

MRS. MOKE. [*To* JUDY] Your groceries came.

JUDY. Thank you.

[MRS. MOKE *sweeps a sudden malignant glance at* JACKIE. JACKIE *quails.*]

MRS. MOKE. [*Bursting out*] It's wet outside ! Did you wipe your feet coming up ?

JACKIE. Yes. . . .

MRS. MOKE. You're a visitor I don't want 'anging about the stairs ! If you've finished your business, I'll thank you to go !

JACKIE. [*To* JUDY] Good-bye.

JUDY. Good-bye, Jackie.

[JACKIE *goes.* MRS. MOKE *puts the bag of groceries on the table. There is a curiously grim and unfriendly touch about this* MRS. MOKE.]

MRS. MOKE. That'll be four and six to pay.

JUDY. Just wait a moment. I'll get it for you.

[*She goes into the kitchen.* MRS. MOKE *looks around and sniffs.* JUDY *returns, fumbling in purse.*]

You haven't any change . . . ?

MRS. MOKE. No. I haven't.

JUDY. [*Smiling*] I've only got five shillings. You can give me the sixpence some other time.

[MRS. MOKE *goes to door,* JUDY *still holding out her hand.*]

I said. . . .

MRS. MOKE. I don't need to owe you anything. You can give it me when *you've* got change.

JUDY. Mrs. Moke ! [MRS. MOKE *pauses*] Are you trying to be rude ?

MRS. MOKE. Why should I be rude ?

JUDY. I'm asking that.

MRS. MOKE. [*In the same flat tone*] I brought up your things. I'm not obliged to. *I* don't have my groceries delivered to my door. If you're satisfied, I'll go. I've got some things to do.

JUDY. No. [*Goes between* MRS. MOKE *and door, standing with her back to it.*]

MRS. MOKE. [*Swelling slightly*] I'm the landlady 'ere. . . .

JUDY. I'm not satisfied.

MRS. MOKE. Well, you don't say ?

JUDY [*Softening*] Mrs. Moke. Why are you so persistently unfriendly with me ? You were so kind to me when I first came.

MRS. MOKE. You were only a girl—with a kid brother—then.

JUDY. I'm still a girl.

MRS. MOKE. [*Sombrely*] But not the same kind of girl.

JUDY. Mrs. Moke, do be sweet. . . . You could help me so much. I'm so often lost in keeping house. . . .

MRS. MOKE. That's your affair.

JUDY. You used to be fond of Simon. He hasn't done anything. Now you won't look at him.

MRS. MOKE. And that's *my* affair.

JUDY. [*With a sharp laugh*] Why, you used to think Simon and Micky were practically your sons. After all the years they've been here. . . .

MRS. MOKE. P'raps it's because 'e's been 'ere so many years, I let your—[*with difficulty*]—your——

JUDY. [*Swiftly*] No, not my husband yet.

MRS. MOKE. —— whatever you call 'im, stay. [*Harshly*] You're taking up my time, miss.

JUDY. That's right—not Mrs.

MRS. MOKE. [*Bridling rapidly*] And if you're trying to be impertinent. . . .

JUDY. [*Sitting suddenly, very tired*] Thank you, Mrs. Moke. We won't discuss it now.

MRS. MOKE. Don't get 'oity-toity with me.

JUDY. Mrs. Moke, please go.

MRS. MOKE. [*Fiercely*] I've started saying my piece, I'm going to finish it now. I've 'ad a bit of my mind ready for you some time, young modern miss. I've never 'ad a business like this under my roof before. It's because I've 'ad that boy so long I'm standing it now. [*With a sublime wealth of scorn*] You modern young things with your modern ideas—evadin' your responsibilities !—to 'ave your bit o' fun ! What can that boy of yours think of you ?—a cheap bit of fluff ! As bad as any of those bits of skirts 'anging about the corner of the street. . . . [*Virulently*] Turning my 'ouse into a. . . .

[MICKY *has come in. He approaches* MRS. MOKE *with a kind of luxurious ominousness.*]

MICKY. [*Softly—in her own accents*] You can't use that there word 'ere.

MRS. MOKE. [*Outraged*] Never you mind. . . .

MICKY. Sit down, Mokey-doke. [*Pushes her into chair.*]

MRS. MOKE. [*Always secretly nervous of* MICKY] I've got things to do. . . . [*Trying to rise.*]

MICKY. [*Pushing her back*] So have I. On you. [*Rubbing his hands lovingly*] A very interesting lecture on the sexual problem—coming from you. You must have had a lot of experience in it to be so sure.

MRS. MOKE. You never mind me.

MICKY. [*Murderously*] But I do mind you. A woman of such remarkable conviction must have dabbled in it pretty heftily—eh, Mokey-doke ? [*Winking*] What you don't know about having your bit of fun . . . eh, old whirligig ? So let's have a look at this perfect sex-life of yours.

MRS. MOKE. [*Weakly*] Don't bully me. . . .

MICKY. [*In the manner of a surgeon*] I'm going to analyse you, Mrs. Moke. Dissect your love-life. [*Roaring*] Sit where you are ! [*Blissfully again*] Ever looked at your husband, dearie ?

MRS. MOKE. Suppose I 'ave. . . .?

MICKY. A worm. A stunted tree. You've withered him, Mrs. Moke. He was once a fertile plain : he's a desert now. Who did it ? You. Cleopatra the Second. Is that the perfect sex-life you're shoving on us ?

MRS. MOKE. [*Fascinatedly*] You mind your language. . . .

MICKY. Now let's have a look at you. Come under the microscope, Mrs. Moke ! You're going to be cut up. . . . Mrs. Moke, you're unsatisfied. That's what. You're practically a spinster, and you're taking it out of an honest couple who're trying to approach it decently—because you're jealous, Mrs. Moke ! [*Whispering*] You're a hypochondriac !

MRS. MOKE. Don't say such things to me !

MICKY. A hypocritical puritan . . . !

MRS. MOKE. [*Finding strength*] And I won't be insulted with fancy names !

[*Flies to door.*]

You wait till I send my husband up. . . .

MICKY. Do ! I'll drown him in half a pint of beer !

[MRS. MOKE *disappears.*]

[MICKY *comes centre, closing door.*]

[*Shrugging*] Sorry, Judy. It was the only thing to do.

JUDY. Oh, Micky.

MICKY. What's up, dear ?

JUDY. [*Intensely*] Everything seems to be closing in on me. I'm just getting . . . scared.

MICKY. Don't let that old besom upset you.

JUDY. Micky, can I talk to you ?

MICKY. My time's yours.

JUDY. And will you be honest—and truthful ?

MICKY. Yes. Go ahead.

JUDY. Were you and Simon really happy together ?

MICKY. [*Pausing*] Yes.

JUDY. How happy ?

MICKY. You're worrying yourself over nothing, dearie. . . .

JUDY. [*Insistently*] How happy ?

MICKY. [*Gently ; for a moment he seems to forget himself*] As happy as people who live like us can ever be. We liked to be with each other. I don't think there was ever a moment of strain between us. It used to give us a lot of pleasure just to laugh together. . . . But, of course, it couldn't last.

JUDY. Why not ?

MICKY. Because of you, for one thing.

JUDY. Suppose I hadn't turned up ?

MICKY. Then some other ruddy girl'd have come bouncing in. Shucks, dearie ! Give it up !

JUDY. So, really . . . I've smashed up a perfect and contented friendship.

MICKY. [*Wryly*] For God's sake, Judy !

JUDY. Yes, Micky, it's true. Because once you were happy together—and neither of you is happy now.

MICKY. Don't talk like that.

JUDY. You must hate me.

MICKY. I'm not as low as that.

JUDY. I've been jealous of you, you know.

MICKY. I know. [*Turns away from her.*]

JUDY. You're not blind, are you ?

MICKY. No.

JUDY. It's you he's content with. . . . What can *you* give him that I can't ?

MICKY. [*At length*] Friendship. A pretty good one, dear.

JUDY. I see.

MICKY. And that means peace—and freedom—and understanding. . . . [*Oddly*] Can we drop this argument now ? I think we're both getting rather keyed up.

JUDY. [*Unsteadily*] Yes, I'm . . . I'm all nerves these days.

MICKY. Then don't you think all this nagging yourself sick might get on Simon's nerves, too ?

JUDY. Well, I was just thinking one thing.

MICKY. What ?

JUDY. It's rather crude.

MICKY. Spill it.

JUDY. I was just thinking Simon had had all he . . . wanted of me. . . .

MICKY. [*Coolly*] Well, I don't think Simon deserved that.

[*A little silence :* MICKY *goes to her, sitting by her side, slipping an arm around her waist.*]

[*Softly*] Poor old Judy. You and Simon are getting awfully involved.

JUDY. [*Tragically*] Micky, it's getting awful !

MICKY. [*Comfortingly*] Shut up, ass ! Go on—[*producing hankie*] blow your silly nose. [*She does so*] Another trump ! [*She blows it again*] But it's a pity all the same, you should have to hide things from each other like that.

JUDY. Does he hide things from me ?

MICKY. [*Firmly*] Yes. He does.

JUDY. [*Nervously*] What ?

MICKY. He's scared of telling you himself. So I'll tell you instead. He wants to go away for three months.

JUDY. Go away ?

MICKY. He wants to go to Naples. His pal can get him in the Marine Laboratory during the vac. They'll keep a place warm for him—for when he's through.

JUDY. [*Poignantly*] Micky . . . he wants to leave me for three months ?

MICKY. [*Roughly*] Yes, I said three months. Not three thousand years.

JUDY. And he was scared of telling me ?

MICKY. Scared stiff.

JUDY. [*At length*] Poor Simon.

MICKY. Well ?

JUDY. [*Trying to laugh*] It's terrible, isn't it ? That he should be frightened . . . of telling me things like that.

MICKY. Abso-bloody-lutely tragic. [*Suspiciously*] Going to throw any hysterics ?

JUDY. No.

MICKY. Everything O.K., then ?

JUDY. Everything O.K. ! Now, Micky—would you go ?

MICKY. Sure !

JUDY. You're a dear.

MICKY. You're all right, yourself. Here, give me a kiss ! [*She kisses him*] Atta-girl. . . .

[SIMON *comes in*, MICKY *exits*. SIMON *avoids looking at* JUDY *and sits. Then, beginning sulkily :*]

SIMON. Judy—I. . . .

[*She is looking at him very intensely.*]

What's wrong now ?

[*She shakes her head.*]

I was going to say—I'm sorry. . . .

[*She gives half a pathetic gurgle, half a sob, shaking her head.*]

Oh, hell !

[*She exits into the kitchen. He sits looking after her resentfully. Suddenly, in a blaze of fury, he plants his foot on the table, kicks it over with a wild clatter—then stalks out, crashing the door.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

# ACT TWO

## SCENE 2

*The same. About an hour later. There is an open Gladstone bag on the table into which* JUDY *is hurriedly cramming the things with which the table is littered—lingerie, etc. A suitcase, already packed, stands by the door. There is a knock.* JUDY *pauses—her back to the bag.*

JUDY. [*At length*] Yes ?

[PETER *comes in.*]

Oh—Peter !

PETER. [*Breathlessly*] Came as quick as I could !

JUDY. Close the door, dear.

PETER. Nearly packed ?

JUDY. Yes.

PETER. [*Eagerly*] Here—let's help.

JUDY. Peter—don't ask too many questions, will you ? Because I'm so damned weepy, I'll only make a cock-eyed fool of myself.

PETER. Poor old girl.

JUDY. [*Sniffing*] Now don't you start getting sympathetic. That will set me off ! Just give me those shoes.

PETER. Anything you want, Judy.

JUDY. Quickly, dear.

[*He gives her.*]

Don't stare at me like that, Peter.

PETER. Does . . . he—know ?

JUDY. You don't need to whisper ' he ' as though you were talking of the devil. If you mean Simon. . . .

PETER. Does he know you're going ?

JUDY. No. He doesn't know.

PETER. Oh, Judy !

JUDY. You getting emotional now ?

PETER. [*Fervently*] When you rang me up and told me you were going—I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. . . . Golly, I felt like a kid . . . !

JUDY. You're not going to behave like one ?

PETER. It's been driving me mad all this time. . . . I've felt like nothing on earth since you. . . .

JUDY. [*Drably*] Got launched into a life of sin.

PETER. [*Reproachfully*] Judy. Don't be a swine.

JUDY. Sorry.

PETER. [*Intensely*] It's taken a black cloud off my mind. I am your brother—aren't I ? [*Gripping her hands quiveringly*] I'll never breathe a word of it. . . .

JUDY. [*Oddly*] Don't talk like that.

PETER. We'll forget the whole filthy affair. . . .

JUDY. Peter, I'm not ashamed of it.

PETER. [*Whispering*] Oh, God. Let's get out of here ! I hate the place !

[*She goes on packing hurriedly.*]

And that other fellow's not about. . . . ?

JUDY. Micky ?

PETER. Low-living ruffian.

JUDY. [*Half smiling*] Poor old Peter. You're awfully young.

PETER. Come on ! Let's get out !

JUDY. Peter, you're confusing me. . . .

PETER. [*Restlessly*] I can't wait here—one of them may come in.

[*There is a knock.* MR. MOKE *comes in.*]

Oh !

MR. MOKE. [*Expressionlessly*] Hullo.

PETER. It's you.

MR. MOKE. Who did you think it was ? Mickey Mouse ? [*To* JUDY, *nodding to bag by door*] Shall I take this bag down now ?

JUDY. I've nearly finished this one.

MR. MOKE. [*Imperturbably*] Regular scramble to get out, ain't it ?

PETER. [*Huffily*] Mind your own damned business.

MR. MOKE. Pleasure, 'm sure.

PETER. Ready, Judy ?

JUDY. Almost. . . .

MR. MOKE. Yes, you should've seen Mrs. Moke's face when you told 'er you were shootin' off. Could've cut you like a knife. " I knew it ! " said she. " And about time, too ! "

JUDY. [*Pausing*] What did she know, Mr. Moke ?

PETER. For God's sake, don't talk to him. . . .

MR. MOKE. [*Blandly*] Ask me another. All women is nuts. Now I'm going to shove my word in.

JUDY. You can take that bag down now.

MR. MOKE. When I'm finished.

PETER. You heard what she said !

MR. MOKE. [*Astonishingly confident*] In the words of the prophet Obadiah—just you pipe down. I'm one of the lads of the village, you know. Me and Simon and Micky—all boys together. [*Winks*] What-o ! Been out on the tiles with 'em more than once—and [*pointing to bathroom*] slept it off in the bathroom there before old Mokey-dokey found out. So I know those lads. What I want to say is—how d'you think young Simon'll feel, you sneaking off like this ?

PETER. Will you get out ?

JUDY. Please, Mr. Moke. I *am* so tired.

MR. MOKE. Well, I want you to know I've been 'unting for Simon and Micky like mad. I wouldn't want them to think I was letting you go without stopping you some'ow. [*Brightly*] Taxi ?

[JUDY *drags on her hat, picks up one bag.*]

PETER. I've got one waiting.

MR. MOKE. [*Picking up second bag*] Let the retreat begin !

PETER. [*Hesitating*] Judy—before we go. . . .

JUDY. What is it, dear ?

PETER. [*Bellowing at* MR. MOKE] For God's sake, get out !

MR. MOKE. Another gentle 'int. You're getting subtle, pal. [*Exits.*]

PETER. [*Harassed*] Judy—I got so down worrying about you last week. This affair's been depressing me sick. I couldn't keep it to myself any more—I was going to write to dad—and blurt everything out. . . .

JUDY. [*Frightened*] But you didn't ?

PETER. No.

JUDY. Then. . . . ?

PETER. I wrote to Geoff instead.

JUDY. How could you.

PETER. He came down this morning. He's waiting in the taxi now.

JUDY. I'm so sorry you did that.

PETER. [*Eagerly*] Judy—he's being awfully decent about it . . . !

JUDY. I don't want anyone to be decent about anything !

PETER. Someone had to do something.

JUDY. [*Wearily*] Come on. Do let's go. It would be too awful if Simon or Micky caught us now.

[MR. MOKE *enters.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Dryly*] Someone's 'ere. Visitor.

[GEOFFREY SUMMERS *comes in. He is about twenty-eight—a young man with a very calm and pleasantly collected manner for one of his age. He looks just a little too " wise ". He is extremely good looking and well dressed.*]

GEOFF. Hullo, Judy.

JUDY. Hullo, Geoff.

GEOFF. [*Smiling*] If you don't hurry up, it'll be cheaper to buy the taxi, dear.

JUDY. I'm sorry you came, Geoff.

GEOFF. I'm rather glad. [*Takes her hand tenderly*] You're not looking so well.

JUDY. I'll be all right.

GEOFF. [*Gently*] We'll see to that. Very well, let's go. . . .

[*But* MR. MOKE *has begun to behave curiously and violently; he is standing on the landing, looking down stairs and shouting—waving his hands spasmodically.*]

MR. MOKE. Come on, will you? Don't be all day! . . .

GEOFF. [*To Peter*] Is he mental?

MR. MOKE. [*Beaming breathlessly as* MICKY *appears*] What-o, you've come! You got my message after all!

MICKY. [*Entering, chuckling*] Control yourself, Gunga Din. [*Nodding to* PETER] Hullo, Peter. [*He looks at* GEOFF. *smiling faintly—then seeing the bags, his expression changes: To* JUDY] What's this, ducky?

JUDY. (*Nervously*] Micky, dear. . . .

GEOFF. May I introduce myself?

MICKY. We'll skip the pleasure—whoever you are. [*To* PETER *unemotionally*] You little rat.

PETER. [*Furiously*] Don't talk to me like that. . . .!

MICKY. I'm surprised I'm talking to you at all—when I might be kicking you. Coming here, whining and making mischief. . . . [*With an agressive move*] I ought to pitch you down those stairs. . . .

PETER. Get out of the way!

MICKY. [*Fists up*] Want your eye dotted?

MR. MOKE. [*Delightedly*] Don't ask him! Dot it!

JUDY. Micky!

MICKY. You don't go yet, Judy. You'll see Simon first.

GEOFF. [*To* JUDY *mildly*] Oh? Then this isn't . . .?

MICKY. [*Vulgarly*] No. I'm not Simon.

GEOFF. I'm Geoffrey Summers. How do you do?

MICKY. And I'm Dogsbody, the odd job man. And I don't care how you do.

JUDY. Micky, you don't know what you're doing.

MICKY. I'm bloody sure you don't know what you're doing. Moke! Go and get Simon! He's down in the Golden Lion. . . .

MR. MOKE. [*Scurrying off*] Right-ho!

MICKY. Never mind how he is ! Drag him up !

JUDY. Is he. . . . ?

MICKY. [*Viciously*] Yes, he's tiddley ! We were drowning each other's sorrows. I'm tiddley, too. . . . [JUDY *shaking her head unhappily*] All right ! Perhaps I'd better get him up myself. . . . [*Crosses to door.*]

GEOFF. [*Coolly*] One moment, Mr. Dogsbody.

[MICKY *pauses on landing.*]

I like your manners as little as I like your dress. You might remember that you're not addressing members of your own peculiar class.

MICKY. [*Stifled*] Why—you. . . .

GEOFF. [*Unmoved*] By all means bring your friend up—if you can. We're not afraid of him. In the meantime, I have a taxi outside. The fare should be five and six. I usually tip them one and six. [*Cuttingly*] Here are eight shillings. You may keep the extra shilling yourself. [*Drops money into* MICKY's *unresponsive hand*—MICKY *staring at him strugglingly.*]

[SIMON *comes in.*]

SIMON. Hullo. [*Smiling*] Hullo, Peter. [*Looking at* GEOFFREY] Ah, Company !

[SIMON *is in that faintly distressful, forcibly cheerful state which comes with the beginning of a " tiddley ". He is just sufficiently drunk to see that he is unhappier than he has ever been—without quite knowing why.*]

SIMON. Isn't somebody going to introduce me ?

GEOFF. You're Simon Revel.

SIMON. [*Bowing exaggeratedly*] A simple name—but an honest one. I'm unaccountably short of cards. Still . . . your servant, sir !

[*Bows again*] You don't have to hold me, Micky.

MICKY. [*Gruffly*] You would be tight. . . .

SIMON. I've merely drowned my sorrows in a couple of pints. [*Harshly*] I can stand, Micky !

MICKY. All right. [*Releases him.*]

SIMON. [*To* JUDY] Miss . . . er—? I already have the

pleasure of your acquaintance. [*Looking at* PETER *virulently*] And we all know *Brother Rat* over there. [*To* GEOFF.] So who are you ?

GEOFF. [*Gently*] I'm rather sorry we've found you like this.

SIMON. When I need your pity I'll ask for it.

GEOFF. My name's Geoffrey Summers. I'm a friend of Judy's family. Judy and I were brought up together.

SIMON. Oh ? A budding romance, eh ?

GEOFF. Since you put it like that.

SIMON. [*To* JUDY] You never told me.

JUDY. It wouldn't have mattered.

GEOFF. Believe me, Judy, it's going to matter now.

SIMON. I like these masterful men. Cool as a cucumber ! And me rocky on my pins. . . . All right, Micky. You can go.

MICKY. Do you want me to go ? [*His pathetic eyes are on* SIMON *all the time.*]

SIMON. [*Affectionately*] Hop off, old dear.

[MICKY *exits.*]

Packing, Judy ?

PETER. Packed !

SIMON. Well, ta, ta, Judy. I'll think of you.

JUDY. Simon—I can't go now until. . . .

SIMON. Until you've said your piece ? Skip it. [*Gently*] Come on, hop off.

JUDY. I wish you wouldn't. . . .

SIMON. What *do* you want ? You want to go. You've packed ! Right-o—good-bye.

GEOFF. Let's go, Judy.

PETER. Judy !

SIMON. [*Bitterly*] As for you, you little swine . . . you've mucked this up, if anyone has. Coming here, every day, snivelling behind my back. . . .

PETER. You rotter.

SIMON. [*Opening the door*] Get out.

PETER. [*Emotionally*] Don't talk to me like that.

GEOFF. Steady, Peter.

PETER. I suppose you thought I'd just stand by. . . .

JUDY. Peter ! Go down !

[*Together.*]

GEOFF. Now we must go, Judy.

JUDY. I must speak to Simon first.

GEOFF. You really don't have to.

JUDY. Wait for me in the taxi.

GEOFF. Very well. Come along, Peter.

[GEOFFREY *and* PETER *exit.*]

SIMON. [*Dully*] Don't let's have any more exhausting scenes. We've had enough these last few weeks.

JUDY. [*Simply*] Yes. We have had rather a lot of them, haven't we ? I hope I'll never see that expression on your face—again.

SIMON. What expression ?

JUDY. Hate and—bitterness.

SIMON. You're being a bit dramatic now.

JUDY. I've got to go, Simon.

SIMON. The door's there.

JUDY. Only don't let me go like that.

SIMON. [*Curiously*] Are you trying to build up to a tender farewell ?

JUDY. Well—some kind of farewell that wouldn't hurt.

SIMON. God, what a sense of humour you women've got ! Do you want me to weep with you ?

JUDY. But you think it was cheap, my creeping off behind your back.

SIMON. To put it mildly—pretty low.

JUDY. I couldn't bear to tell you . . . to you face. I thought I'd start to cry. I get all weepy at the least little thing. I've gone so shaky, and I thought . . . I'd hurt you. . . .

SIMON. You can't hurt me now.

JUDY. Do you hate me ?

SIMON. I couldn't hate you. I've been in love with you.

JUDY. Oh. "Been" . . . Well, you've got a good heart, Simon.

SIMON. [*Half grinning*] If I am weak in the nut.

JUDY. You're grinning, anyway.

SIMON. Oh, I'm half soused. Just like me—when I've got the chance to do the big noble stuff.

JUDY. Stupid.

SIMON. [*Miserably*] Handy Andy, that's me—always tripping over his two left feet.

[JUDY *goes slowly to door.*]

Judy.

JUDY. Yes ?

SIMON. Who was that bloke ?

JUDY. Geoffrey was brought up with me.

SIMON. Oh. Boy-and-girl romance, eh ?

JUDY. It was never very serious. . . .

SIMON. He is.

JUDY. Well, perhaps *he's* serious.

SIMON. He looks all right. Decent looking chap. Grab him and marry him.

JUDY. Good-bye, dear.

SIMON. I want to tell you something, Judy. I shan't forget you.

JUDY. Now who's working up to a tender farewell ?

SIMON. Don't cry, silly.

JUDY. No, all right. . . .

SIMON. I'm only tight.

JUDY. [*Despairingly*] We were both so confident when we started out. Honest, I don't know why it all went wrong ! . . . We were going to help and comfort each other—and I was going to be so proud of you when you really got on. I'll still be proud of you, but I don't know why I shan't be there to see it. . . .

SIMON. I know.

JUDY. Yes ?

SIMON. We were a couple of dizzy young romantics. Cheer up, dumbell. Some day, we'll laugh over this.

JUDY. But why did it go wrong?

SIMON. We made a bargain: And then we started watching each other to see if we were keeping the bargain.

JUDY. I never doubted you. . . .

SIMON. You mayn't have thought so. But I know you did. You see, the bargain was to put you second—and my career first. That spoiled it. . . . I should have grabbed you with both hands. You were a jewel! You've worried yourself sick wondering whether living with me was really helping me on. . . . You're an unselfish little thing. And it's been hell to me sometimes to see it—and wonder why I hadn't the guts to stand up to life and marry you first. . . .

JUDY. Did you really think that?

SIMON. Yes.

JUDY. Pity.

SIMON. [*Haggardly*] I—I could have gone to Naples during the vac. It would have been good for me—but not good for you. You'd have had to stay behind. And that started it again—career or Judy?—Judy or career. . . .?

JUDY. I knew about Naples.

SIMON. How?

JUDY. Micky told me.

SIMON. Oh. I—I was windy of telling you.

JUDY. And that's why it all went wrong. [*She takes his hands*] Oh, Simon: There's so much ahead of you! You're going to be great. Every ounce of you has got to fight for it. . . . You can't be distracted with worries like this. Start again with Micky!

SIMON. Nothing else to do.

JUDY. Micky's fonder of you than you know.

SIMON. Is he?

JUDY. He said to me, "We were as happy as people who live like us can ever be."

He said, " It used to give us a lot of pleasure just to laugh together. . . ." He was talking about you.

SIMON. Good old Micky.

JUDY. That's the peaceful life you want.

SIMON. I—I suppose if I asked you——

JUDY. [*Nervously*] No, No ! I really must go !

SIMON. You'll marry that bloke, won't you ?

JUDY. Poor Geoff's taxi must have ticked up a national debt by now.

SIMON. But you're going to, aren't you ?

JUDY. Simon ! How can you ask me !

SIMON. I meant, he's not the sort of chap to worry. . . .

JUDY. Because. . . .? No, Geoff's not like that.

SIMON. Because some blokes would say I'd done the dirty on you.

JUDY. Dear Simon ! No !

SIMON. All right. [*The faint insistent sound of a taxi horn is heard*] They're honking for you. [*Shaking her*] Remember . . . no more dallying with poverty-stricken students. If any other struggling young genius asks you to share his life —have a look at his bank balance first. Give us a kiss. [*She kisses him*] Well . . . cheer-o, lovey.

JUDY. Good-bye.

SIMON. And send me a piece of the wedding cake . . . [*But* JUDY *has gone.*]

[GEOFF *comes into the doorway.*]

GEOFF. I meant to ask—if anything's owing that Judy. . .

SIMON. My secretary'll write to you.

[*Sees* GEOFF *staring curiously about the room.*]

[*Gently*] No, no fleas.

GEOFF. Really ?

SIMON. So long.

GEOFF. So long. [*Exits.*]

[SIMON *goes to the door, calls up.*]

SIMON. Micky !

[*A few moments elapse.* MICKY *comes in quietly.*]

MICKY. How d'you feel ?

SIMON. O.K.

MICKY. [*Unhappily*] I thought p'raps. . . .

SIMON. [*Grinning wryly*] I'm not dying. . . . Got any cash ?

MICKY. Have you ? [*Takes* SIMON's *arm almost emotionally—so relieved that he can hardly speak.*]

SIMON. Three bob and the gas money.

MICKY. Who wants gas ? I've got the taxi-money !

SIMON. Well—we'll burn the town up. By the way, what was all that sentimental twaddle you were burbling to Judy ?

MICKY. She asked me—if we used to be happy. . . .

SIMON. We were, weren't we ?

MICKY. You bet we were. . . .

SIMON. Not much luck with women, have we ? Well, we're together, anyway.

MICKY. Sure !

SIMON. Seems we had to come back to each other. [*Grinning*] Do you think we could get some food out of Mrs. Moke ?

MICKY. [*Roaring, at door*] Moke !

[*But* MRS. MOKE *has just come in. . . .*]

MRS. MOKE. [*Coldly*] I've got ears.

MICKY. [*Agape*] Well, that's the fastest you've popped up.

MRS. MOKE. And *Mrs.* Moke to you.

SIMON. You're looking almost happy to-night, Mokey. Has your husband been tickling you ? How about some food ?

MICKY. [*Fondling her*] Eh ? Bit of steak ?—or veal'n ham pie. . . .?

MRS. MOKE. I'm not feeding four mouths !

MICKY. [*Brilliantly*] Cut out Mr. Moke and make it three !

MRS. MOKE. You'll have me bankrupt yet. . . .

MICKY. You couldn't be bankrupt—not with your

charms. [*Shuddering glamorously*] Moke, that feeling's coming on again. . . .

MRS. MOKE. Take your 'ands off me ! [*Escaping*] And there's only fish and chips.

MICKY. And rice pudd'n ?

MRS. MOKE. Well—and maybe rice pudd'n. [*To* SIMON *begrudgingly*] So that affair of yours is over ?

SIMON. Since you put it so tactfully.

MRS. MOKE. [*With an effort—yet fondly*] Now p'raps you'll get some work done. You two lads'll be happier together. You don't want no women messing about the place. . . .

MICKY. Don't we ? [*Approaching slyly*] How d'you think we feel when you come into the room. . . .?

[MR. MOKE *enters.*]

MRS. MOKE. And don't you come near me !

MR. MOKE. [*Looking at* SIMON—*then to* MRS. MOKE *sombrely*] You getting compromised ?

MRS. MOKE. Hold your tongue.

MR. MOKE. [*Smiling to* SIMON] You all right ?

SIMON. For God's sake, stop fawning over me. Sorry. . . . You've all been damned good to me. [*Turning away repentantly.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Rubbing his hands*] Now if we could only celebrate. . . .

MICKY. [*Seizing him eagerly*] You mean, you can come out on the razzle ?

MR. MOKE. [*Whispering, beckoning warningly to* MRS. MOKE] Not in front of. . . .

MICKY. [*Warmly*] How much've you got ?

MR. MOKE. [*All nervous horror of* MRS. MOKE] Can't you see she's. . . .?

[*But* MRS. MOKE *folds her arms and calmly walks out.* MR. MOKE *gapes.*]

Did you see that ? She means—I can . . . [*Whispering incredulously*] That's the first time she ever did that.

MICKY. [*Joyfully*] There's life in the old girl yet.

MR. MOKE. [*Shakily*] Who'd have thought that of Mrs. Moke ? [*Beams tremulously*] Our Mrs. Moke !

[*It seems to soak in. He gives a tremendous beam all round—then dizzily :*]

MICKY, MR. MOKE. Whoopee !

[*They dissolve into laughter ;* MR. MOKE *hurries out.*]

MICKY. [*Softly*] Snap out of it, old son. . . .

[*Crosses to* SIMON, *takes his arm. . .*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

# ACT THREE

## SCENE I

*The same. A morning about fifteen months later. When the curtain rises,* MICKY *is sitting at the table, reading,* MRS. MOKE *enters—a little furtively.*

MRS. MOKE. Is he ready ?

MICKY. Almost.

MRS. MOKE. I'll send his breakfast up. [*Pause*] There's a letter for you.

[*She gives it to him. He glances at it, then puts it down. She goes to the door—then stands as if her baffled curiosity is too much for her.*]

[*Grimly*] It's from your wife, isn't it ?

MICKY. Yes.

MRS. MOKE. Well, aren't you going to open it ?

[*He does not answer.*]

I suppose you can guess how much she wants ! . . . [*Sulkily*] Well, tell me to mind my own business.

MICKY. Do.

[*He opens the letter : reads. Still she pauses, watching him furtively. He crumples the letter suddenly.*]

MRS. MOKE. [*Unsurely*] If it's bad news. . . .?

MICKY. [*Bitterly*] What are you waiting for ? Do you want to gloat ?

MRS. MOKE. [*Stoutly*] Micky Saunders, don't you say such things ! I've never wanted anything for you—that I wouldn't have wanted for my own son.

MICKY. It is from my wife. . . . She wants a divorce.

MRS. MOKE. Oh. I didn't know it was like that.

MICKY. Well—it is.

MRS. MOKE. [*With a rough sympathy*] I'm sorry, dear.

MICKY. It's all right.

MRS. MOKE. It's hurt you properly, hasn't it ?

MICKY. [*Sighing*] I'm used to being hurt.

[*She exits.* SIMON *enters.* MICKY *forces an expression of lightness.*]

Ah, you're ready. Enjoyed your bath ? Thought you'd been sucked down the drain-pipe.

SIMON. Damn good bath !

MICKY. Feeling ready for the fray ?

SIMON. Fine.

MICKY. That's good. [*Walks round* SIMON *critically*] Clean shirt for the occasion ?—good. Nice smell of talcum—? [*Sniffs at him*] If there's a female examiner—let her get a good sniff of that.

SIMON. The examiner's Professor Watkins. If I stank like a skunk it'd make no odds to him.

MICKY. Nicely shaved ? Good ! Well, get some food into your old tum ! [*Goes to banister, shouts down*] Waiter ! [*Faint reply*] O.K. ! He's ready ! Fetch his breakfast up ! [*Returns.*]

SIMON. I didn't sleep so well. How the hell I've slept through last month's swotting, anyway, is a mystery to me.

MICKY. You're not feeling jumpy ?

SIMON. [*Nervously*] I am—when I think of it.

MICKY. You've got to keep your head !

SIMON. [*Tautly*] I've overdone it a bit—and—I get a sinking feeling down here every time I think of it.

MICKY. You'll get through !

SIMON. How many poor blokes sitting for that exam. are telling themselves that right now ?—and I wonder how many won't.

MICKY. Here, for heaven's sake, don't talk like that.

SIMON. Well—it's come.

MICKY. Sure. And it'll go. Once you get your head over those papers and start scribbling away—you'll forget your blasted nerves.

[MR. MOKE *enters with a tray.*]

MR. MOKE. Special treat for the occasion. . . .

MICKY. [*Sarcastically*] Liver and B. ?

MR. MOKE. [*Laconically*] No—sausage and B.

SIMON. Just some tea. I couldn't eat.

MICKY. Don't be an ass ! You can't go through an exam. with a rumbling tum.

SIMON. I couldn't eat. . . .

MR. MOKE. [*Affably*] Just a mouthful. To please old Moke.

SIMON. Quickly, then. I'm late.

[*Begins to eat hurriedly*—MICKY *sits opposite.*]

MR. MOKE. Feeling good ? [*Pouring out tea.*]

SIMON. Not awfully good. A bit quivery, you know.

MR. MOKE. [*Cheerfully*] Fine. Doesn't do to be too confident.

MICKY. Go on—cheer him some more. You'll get him epileptic yet.

MR. MOKE. I've seen some blokes go up for exams. all full of joy de veeve. . . .

MICKY. [*explaining kindly to* SIMON] He means *joie de vivre.*

MR. MOKE. That's right ; I said joy de veeve. Damn certain they'd pass, all of 'em. And I've seen 'em come stumours, every one. It's the nervous ones get through. . . . [*Nonchalently to* SIMON.] Have some sausage.

MICKY. [*Encouragingly*] You know, you can still have that crib ?

SIMON. [*Aghast*] For God's sake, Micky. . . .!

MR. MOKE. [*Interested*] Got a crib, have you ?

MICKY. Regular beaut. Invented it myself ! All you've got to do is write the stuff on your finger nails and keep a monocle in your eye ! [*Mimes it furtively.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Amiably*] You know, Dartmoor must be missing you.

MICKY. He won't use it, anyway. [*To* SIMON, *who has stopped eating and is muttering vaguely at the ceiling*] What's the matter now ?

SIMON. Just seeing if I know the bones of the skull.

MICKY. Look at him—anyone'd think he'd got an appointment with the public executioner !

SIMON. That's how it feels.

MR. MOKE. It'll be easy as pie.

SIMON. [*Despairingly*] Moke—you don't know what this means to me ! First day of the exams.—years and years of sweat and grind—every hope and ambition I've had pinned to the next few days—and all wasted if I'm ploughed ! How the hell can I go to it feeling like—like a successful banker. . . .

MR. MOKE. Your sausage is getting cold.

SIMON. [*Shakily*] Damn my sausage. . . .

MICKY. [*Coarsely*] Come on, no time for prima donna stuff now ! What the hell are you—man or mouse ? [*Shakes* SIMON *fiercely*] You'll get through—not by luck or because we're praying for you—but because you've worked like a nigger for four years ! You can't fool those old professors—they *know* when a man's sweated or not. . . .

SIMON. [*Mazedly*] I'm only afraid I've overdone it. [*Presses his head*] I tell you, my brain feels like mud. I'm stale—I know——!

MICKY. You're about as stale as that sausage and it smells damn good ! [*Chuckling*] So do you—take a niff at him, Moke : my talcum ! [*Affectedly*] Love's Desire !

SIMON. You can joke. . . .

MICKY. There's nothing to do but joke when a bloke like you gets panicky ! [*Firmly*] Listen, if I had another shirt—[*Confidentially*] you're wearing it, by the way—I'd put it on you.

SIMON. Honest ? [*Half laughs.*]

MICKY. Take it easy, Simon. It'll fall right into your lap.

SIMON. [*Getting up*] I can't eat any more. I'll be sick if I do. [*Gulps down tea*] It was grand of you, Moke, all the same.

[MR. MOKE *takes a small bottle out of his hip pocket.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Secretively*] Now a quick nip'll buck you up. . .

MICKY. [*Roughly*] What the hell is this ? Trying to dope the favourite ?

MR. MOKE. [*Injured*] A drop'll do him good. . . .

MICKY. It'll give him a thick head when he needs it clear ! Put it away ! No ! Give it to me ! [*Snatches bottle and puts it in his own pocket loftily*] Now get back to your four-poster and pray for this fool.

MR. MOKE. [*Grimly*] If that bottle's empty when I come up. . . .

MICKY. I only take the stuff as medicine. [*Winking*] And I'm waiting for my doctor right now.

MR. MOKE. [*To* SIMON] Well—here's wishing you luck. Mrs. Moke's too nervous to come up and says I should tell you she's wishin' you the best. [*Shakes hands with* SIMON *with great formality.*]

SIMON. Thanks. [MR. MOKE *exits.*]

I'll get my things together and move.

MICKY. [*Smiling*] All ready on the sideboard.

[SIMON *straps a little pile of books together.*]

Here's your microscope.

[*Brings it forward, fixes it in case.*]

SIMON. That's all. Well . . . the fatal day's come.

MICKY. [*Gently*] Shall I walk down with you ?

SIMON. No.

MICKY. If you get nervy or panicky just think of me grinning at you. That'll put you right again.

SIMON. I don't know how I'd have got through these last few months without you. . . .

MICKY. Ass.

SIMON. I meant . . . after Judy went. If I hadn't had you, I'd have gone to bits, I know. [*Vaguely*] I wonder what she. . . .

MICKY. She's gone. And I don't think it's quite the moment to dig that business up. [*Busily*] Now, scram !

SIMON. I've got my slides to pack upstairs. [*Goes to door*] I'll be five minutes.

MICKY. Hurry !

[JACKIE *enters.*]

JACKIE. [*Grinning*] Here ! To bring you luck ! [*Gives him a huge sprig of heather*] Heather !

MICKY. [*Impatiently*] That's right ! That'll help ! Walking in there looking like a prairie.

JACKIE. Don't take any notice of him, Simon. It's the surest thing there is.

MICKY. [*Pushing* SIMON to door] Come on, prairie blossom —get your slides packed quick.

[SIMON *exits.* MICKY *stands, suddenly limp.*]

Whew !

JACKIE. [*Whispering*] Is he nervous ?

MICKY. [*Tragically*] Is he . . .? Am *I* nervous ! [*Exhibits shaking hand.*]

JACKIE. But is he. . . .?

MICKY. He's all in. Overdone it a bit. God, if . . . after all these years . . . he mugs it up now: [*Gritting his teeth*] He must get through !

JACKIE. He will !

MICKY. [*Harassed*] What the hell do you know about it ? About the months of sweat he's had—and all his hopes and . . .? [*Oddly*] Sorry. *I'm* getting prima donnerish now.

JACKIE. [*Smiling*] You've been like a brother and a father to him. . . .

MICKY. . . . and a wet nurse, rolled into one. Well— we're praying for him now.

[*A knock.* PETER *comes in. There is a silence.*]

MICKY. You——?

PETER. I'm looking for Revel.

MICKY. Simon's out. What do *you* want with him ?

PETER. [*Sullenly*] You'll find out.

MICKY. [*Grimly*] Are you looking for trouble ?

PETER. [*Bursting out*] Trouble ! *You* talk about trouble. . . [*His voice quavers off.*]

MICKY. What are you babbling about ?

PETER. I want to talk to Revel !

MICKY. I've told you he's not around.

PETER. [*Viciously*] Not convenient, eh ?

MICKY. What do you mean ?

PETER. I suppose you think it's better he shouldn't know ? Judy has to grin and bear it while he ducks everything. . . .

MICKY. What are you trying to say ?

PETER. Judy doesn't know I'm here—but somebody's got to tell him. . . .!

MICKY. Tell him what ?

PETER. About Judy's kid.

JACKIE. [*Whispering*] Oh, my God. She had a. . . .?

PETER. Six months ago.

JACKIE. How awful.

PETER. [*Violently*] And everybody trying to keep it a secret from him—that swine. . . .

MICKY. [*At length*] Is she all right ?

PETER. She's all right—but he's got to be told. . . .

MICKY. [*Coolly*] He knows.

[*Pause.*]

PETER. [*Gaping.*] He . . . knows ?

MICKY. He's known all the time. Now what do you say to that ?

PETER. [*Incredulously*] And he hasn't tried to do a thing. . . .?

MICKY. [*Roughly*] He's got worries enough. That's the way of the world, my lad. She took her chance—and it's too bad for her, that's all. It's no use staying. There's no sympathy here.

JACKIE. [*Horrified*] Micky, please. . . .!

MICKY. [*Savagely*] Shut up.

JACKIE. But. . . .

MICKY. Shut up !

[*He thrusts her aside contemptuously.*]

This young pup thinks everybody's a Sir Galahad. Well, we've got no time for chivalry now ! [*To* PETER *crudely*] Sorry. Good-bye.

PETER. [*Choking*] You . . . beast. . . .

MICKY. Go on. Scram off.

[PETER *stands, his mouth tremulous.* MICKY *pushes him out and slams the door.*]

JACKIE. That was awful. . . .

MICKY. You breathe a word of this to Simon—and I'll tear you apart. . . .

JACKIE. [*Aghast*] But you said he knew. . . .?

MICKY. Knew nothing ! [*He seizes* JACKIE *desperately and shakes her*] Do you think I'm going to have that kid around distracting him now ? It's life or death for him, the next few days ! He's going through hell. Tell him what you've just heard . . . and you'll drive him crazy. What do you want to do ? Sign his death warrant now ?

JACKIE. But that poor kid, Judy. . . .

MICKY. [*Harshly*] He means more to me. Let him alone. And . . . shut up, see !

JACKIE. You're not telling the truth.

MICKY. What do you mean ?

JACKIE. You know why you kicked that boy out. You don't want Judy back. You're jealous . . . you've always been jealous. . . .

MICKY. Don't interfere !

JACKIE. It's true, it's true . . .! [*Weakly*] Oh, you're hurting my arm.

[SIMON *comes in. He carries his coat.*]

SIMON. [*Mildly*] Hullo. What's the fuss ?

JACKIE. Nothing.

SIMON. Did I hear someone's voice ?

JACKIE. It was—only Mr. Moke.

SIMON. I'm off. [*Collects his books and microscope : grins in doorway*] I'm keeping my fingers crossed. [*Holds up his hand, fingers crossed.*]

[MICKY *and* JACKIE *hold up both hands, fingers crossed.*]

JACKIE. Good luck !

[SIMON *exits.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

# ACT THREE

## SCENE 2

*The same. Night. About three months later. When the curtain rises, the room is in darkness except for the red glow of the fire.* MRS. MOKE *peers in*—MR. MOKE *behind. A pause. Then he switches on the light and thrusts her in brusquely.*

MRS. MOKE. You gave me the fright of my life !

MR. MOKE. Who did you think was be'ind you ? Frankenstein ?

MRS. MOKE. [*Testily*] I've told you before not to throw me about like that.

MR. MOKE. [*Disdainfully*] It's just the brute in me. Well, put the parcel down.

MRS. MOKE. Don't rush me !

MR. MOKE. You'll look a nice kind of fool if they come up and find us here. Go on, drop it like an 'ot brick and let's get out.

MRS. MOKE. If you can't do things with dignity, Moke . . . [*Listening nervously*] Is someone coming up ?

MR. MOKE. No.

MRS. MOKE. I heard steps. . . . [*Pause, with relief*] No, it's only my 'eart beating, after all. [*Then, looking round, conspiratorially*] I'll leave it on the settee.

MR. MOKE. Go on, then. Drop it quick.

MRS. MOKE. No . . . no, that's silly. Suppose he sat on it. I'll put it on the mantelpiece.

MR. MOKE. [*Laconically*] Slap it down, then. Hurry, now !

MRS. MOKE. Suppose he doesn't see it on the mantelpiece ?

MR. MOKE. [*Wearily*] Then I'll collect it after he's gone and get me money back.

MRS. MOKE. That's a nice thing to say ! I'll put it there—

right in the middle of the table ! He'd have to be blind not to see it.

MR. MOKE. That'll do.

MRS. MOKE. [*Hesitantly*] Only it's a bit obvious, just dumping it there like that. . . .

MR. MOKE. Either you want to leave it or you don't ! Make your mind up !

MRS. MOKE. Hush.

MR. MOKE. Never met a fusspot like you. Here, hand it over ! [*Snatches parcel, slams it irritably on table and pushes her to door*] Now let's get out !

[*Suddenly, a muffled alarm goes off violently—they stand stiffly.*]

'Ell !

MRS. MOKE. [*Aghast*] Did you wind the alarm up ?

MR. MOKE. [*Transfixed*] Yes.

MRS. MOKE. What for, you fool ? Stop it, quick !

MR. MOKE. How can I without opening it ? [*Dabbing parcel*] For mercy's sake. . . .

MRS. MOKE. [*Listening*] Is that the front door ? [*A distant bang.*]

MR. MOKE. Yes.

MRS. MOKE. They're here. . . . Let's get out ! [*She seizes the parcel harassedly, muffles it in her apron, switches off the light and the two hurry out. The alarm fades away.*]

[*A pause. Then the door opens and, silhouetted in the doorway,* MICKY *fumbles for the switch. He is laughing helplessly. When the light comes on, he remains leaning against the door post, still gurgling—*SIMON *coming in past him. Both are flushed with high spirits and in astonishingly resplendent dinner jackets.*]

SIMON. Shut up, you burbling ass—I told you not to drink so much champagne.

MICKY. It's not the champagne.

SIMON. [*Weakly*] Then what are you cackling at ?

MICKY. You.

SIMON. I think I look pretty good.

MICKY. [*Hilariously*] Waiter !

SIMON. You damned fool—come in. [*Dropping into a chair*] Thank God for a rest.

MICKY. [*Entering*] Oh, my pore feet. . . . These damned shoes have made me pigeon-toed. [*Hobbling*] Did you see that old battleship I danced with ?

SIMON. Nice old dear—apart from the squint.

MICKY. She walked right up my legs to my kneecaps. [*Removes shoes feebly*] Dance ? . . . She couldn't dance ! She just rambled !

SIMON. [*Helplessly*] What an evening !

MICKY. She said, " There's a peculiar odour about isn't there ? The room *is* getting close ! " Close ! [*Dips into breast pocket, producing them*] Moth balls !

SIMON. So that's what niffed.

MICKY. They didn't really come alive until the room got hot. Ho ! ho ! ho !

SIMON. Do you want your deposit back on those togs ?

MICKY. If I'm going to eat next week.

SIMON. Then get that jacket off before you bust the seams.

MICKY. It's all right, pal. I took a deep breath during dinner. I've already busted 'em.

[*This sets them off again mirthfully.*]

SIMON. [*Wiping his eyes*] I'm damned if I know why, but I haven't laughed so much for years. . . .

MICKY. I'm going to get this soup-and-fish off. [*Removes coat, begins to unfasten tie.*]

SIMON. We shan't forget to-night.

MICKY. Not for a million years.

[*They are both quiet now for a few moments.*]

SIMON. I'd better finish packing. Mustn't miss that train.

MICKY. You've got yards of time. I'll see you get it. Leave it to me.

SIMON. [*Affectionately*] Micky, I'm going to miss you like hell. . . .

MICKY. Are you ?

SIMON. We've lived together so long : it's been like a lifetime.

MICKY. I've enjoyed it.

SIMON. I wonder whether we'll ever be as happy as that again. [*This is as much emotion as he can permit himself at the moment.*]

MICKY. [*Touchingly*] Ah, youth, youth ! The springtime of youth ! . . . How about a good hearty sob ?

SIMON. You old fool. . . . It's been a funny day, hasn't it ? Like a whirl. I've got my degree—I've got a job—and everybody weeping on each other's shoulders at the College dinner, everybody saying good-bye. . . . I can't get used to the idea that in a couple of hours I'll be saying good-bye myself.

MICKY. [*Sighing gustily*] That's the way it goes.

SIMON. Afraid of getting sentimental, aren't you ?

MICKY. I am.

SIMON. And to-morrow you and the Mokes and this room'll be as far behind as . . . as another lifetime.

MICKY. [*Rudely*] Boo hoo ! Get going !

[*During the ensuing scene,* SIMON *drags forward two suitcases from under the settee, stuffing into them several things as he goes along.*]

SIMON. I suppose you won't object if I take that blue tie of mine ?

MICKY. [*Pathetically*] Dammit, I've got used to it.

SIMON. Well, how about my slippers ?

MICKY. Take your slippers.

SIMON. And my. . . .

MICKY. [*Martyred*] Take your shirts !

SIMON. [*Chuckling*] Here—I'm going to leave you naked.

MICKY. [*Firmly, grabbing it out of suitcase*] Oh, no, you don't !

SIMON. My razor.

MICKY. My razor !

SIMON. I distinctly remember buying it four years ago. . . .

MICKY. As a Christmas present to me. You don't leave me with any beard !

SIMON. Keep the razor. Er, still—my braces, please.

[MICKY *tosses him his braces.*]

MICKY. From now on I keep my pants up by will power. [*Loftily*] Personally, these farewell binges give me a pain.

SIMON. I'll bet they do !

MICKY. [*Stiltedly*] And what do you mean by that, Mr. Revel ?

SIMON. I saw you suffering with that yellow-haired girl in the cloakroom.

MICKY. [*Earnestly*] That wench ? Simon—stone cold ! I couldn't work up any passion in her. . . .

SIMON. If that lipstick round your ears wasn't passion, I'd like to know what it was. What's more, it was the gentlemen's cloakroom ! I saw a Professor of Maths. go in and come out looking *very* hot and bothered.

MICKY. [*Grinning*] That must have given him some new kind of figures to think about. [*Hobbling again*] Oh, my poor toes . . . Damn that dancing gasometer. . . .

SIMON. [*Closing one bag*] Well, there's not much more to shove in.

MICKY. [*Suddenly*] Look here—I'd better warn you.

SIMON. Eh ?

MICKY. The Mokes are coming up.

SIMON. [*Softly*] All right. You didn't think I wasn't going to see them before I go ?

MICKY. There's going to be an overflow of tears. They're —er, going to make you a presentation.

SIMON. Oh, are they. Well. . . .

MICKY. I helped 'em to choose it. [*Chuckles*] Anyway, they're on the stairs waiting for me to call 'em up.

SIMON. [*Reproachfully*] You might have told me.

MICKY. The moment's ripe. [*Going to door.*]

SIMON. I say, don't let them. . . .

MICKY. [*Briskly*] What's this, what's this ! Trying to deprive a poor old couple of an innocent sob ? [*Hearing the* MOKES] Come on—a bit of dignity, please !

[*Opens door, revealing* MR. *and* MRS. MOKE *in earnest conference. They enter sheepishly. To cover their unaccustomed emotions, they have assumed a sort of grim nonchalance.* MR. MOKE *is puffing a huge pipe,* MRS. MOKE *has something under her apron which not all their unconcern can hide*].

MR. MOKE. [*Vaguely*] Hullo—lads.

MICKY. [*Just as airily*] Hullo—Moke. What brought you up ?

MR. MOKE. Oh, just popped in. See how things are going.

MICKY. Well, park your fanny.

MR. MOKE. I'd rather stand.

[*Long pause.*]

MICKY. [*Cheerfully*] It's been a nice evening, hasn't it ? Good weather for the time of the year !

MR. MOKE. So they tell me.

MICKY. That is, if the rain keeps off. What's that you're smoking ? Stable mixture ?

MR. MOKE. Try some ! [*Proffering pouch.*]

MICKY. Thanks, I'll die some other time.

MRS. MOKE. [*Fiercely*] That'll do ! [*To* MR. MOKE] Take that incinerator out of your mouth at once !

MR. MOKE. [*Protestingly*] It's a man's smoke. . . .

MRS. MOKE. Do as you're told. And don't stand there, Micky Saunders, as though you don't know why we're here !

SIMON. [*Gently*] You've come to see me, haven't you, Mrs. Moke ?

MRS. MOKE. [*Vaguely*] Moke and me. . . .

MICKY. Speech ! [*Encouragingly.*]

MRS. MOKE. [*Desperately*] Now it's all gone out of me head ! [*To* SIMON, *with an effort*] You've been with us a long time, you and Micky, and Moke and me have got used to you. In this house, people come and go. . . .

MR. MOKE. [*Philosophically*] Here to-day and gone to-morrow !

MRS. MOKE. But some'ow, you two lads. . . .

MR. MOKE. Coming here, young and innocent, four years ago. . . .

MRS. MOKE. We've got to thinking of you as if you were—well, sons of ours. [*Agitatedly*] Moke ! Don't gape at me !

MR. MOKE. [*Sympathetically*] I know how you feel.

MRS. MOKE. Well, don't look it. [*To* SIMON *again*] You've been a good boy and you've worked 'ard, and you're going to get on. Now you're a Bachelor of Science and we're proud of you. Maybe you'll forget us in your new job in Aberdeen, but me and Moke'll think of you. . . .

MR. MOKE. I told you to write it down.

MRS. MOKE. 'Owever, so be it, you youngsters 'ave your way to make in the world and you've got to be going. So as a kind of remembrance. . . . [*She chokes.*]

SIMON. Mrs. Moke—don't.

MICKY. Golly, we're all crying now.

MRS. MOKE. [*Producing parcel swiftly from under apron*] 'Ere it is—an alarm clock. [*Pointing to* MICKY] He chose it !

MR. MOKE. He said an earthquake couldn't get you out of bed, so we bought the loudest there was.

MRS. MOKE. And there's a fancy shaving set with it, too.

[SIMON *goes to her, kisses her cheek.* MRS. MOKE *seems suddenly lost for words.*]

MR. MOKE. [*To* MICKY *jauntily*] Now you kiss me.

MICKY. [*Affectedly, falling on him*] Oh, Mithter Moke, this is so sudden ! [*Clapping furiously*] Hurray !

MRS. MOKE. [*Weeping*] Come down and see us before you go.

[*Goes out quickly.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Shaking hands with both of them*] The touching ceremony being over, I'll go down and wipe the old woman's tears away. Not bad, was she ? Old Mokey-doke. . . .

[*Chuckles—coughs—then puts pipe in mouth, puffs it fiercely alight and goes out.*]

SIMON. They're very decent—aren't they ?

MICKY. Yes.

SIMON. You don't really see people properly until you're leaving them.

MICKY. Better be thinking of your train.

[MR. MOKE *looks in, whispering.*]

MR. MOKE. Mr. Langton left a message—would you pop down the street and say good-bye to him before you go ? He's waiting in.

SIMON. Old Pussyface ? Sure !

[MR. MOKE *exits.*]

I'll hop out and see him. [*Slips on jacket.*]

MICKY. Right.

SIMON. Micky. . . . [*He sits all of a sudden.*]

MICKY. Yes ?

SIMON. I don't know why it should be so hard for me—to say what I want to say. I don't know what you'll think. . . . but we've had so much fun together. . . .

MICKY. Time for plenty more.

SIMON. Yes. But not with you.

MICKY. Get out into your new life. You'll have lots more fun.

SIMON. We've had five years of companionship that've been as perfect as such things could be. It seems a pity to fold them up and say, they just couldn't go on.

MICKY. Got to be done.

SIMON. What are you going to do ? Keep this room ?

MICKY. Yes.

SIMON. Alone ?

MICKY. Maybe alone.

SIMON. [*Smiling*] Loosen up, you fool. Don't be so stiff. You're hating this like hell.

MICKY. Daresay I am.

SIMON. I've only met two people I could be with and feel

utterly and completely content. You—and Judy. When people like that come into your life, it's tragic to let them go. I've lost Judy. Have I got to lose you, too ?

MICKY. [*Unsurely*] Simon—I don't know what you're getting at. . . .

SIMON. [*Impulsively*] Micky—come with me !

MICKY. To Aberdeen ?

SIMON. You're free-lance. It wouldn't matter where you lived. Pack your things and come !

MICKY. To-night !

SIMON. Right now !

MICKY. [*Curiously*] Are you serious ?

SIMON. God knows, I'm serious.

MICKY. It's nice of you to want me. . . .

SIMON. [*Seizing* MICKY's *arms*] We can't split up now ! Come and burn up Aberdeen with me !

MICKY. [*Nervously*] All right. If you really want me.

SIMON. [*Shaking him violently*] Want you ? Whoopee. . . .!

MICKY. [*Half laughing*] I was only afraid you wouldn't ask me.

SIMON. [*Grabbing overcoat and scarf, dragging them on*] I'll finish the blasted round of farewells. Get packed !

MICKY. Golly, I'm in a ruddy daze. . . .

SIMON. Back in twenty minutes ! [*Crams on hat, dashing to door*] Scots wha' hae ! [*Exits*]

[*For a few moments,* MICKY *stands staring after him. Then going to door, he roars down :*]

MICKY. Moke ! [*A pause : a faint answering cry.*] Never mind your supper ! . . . Come up !

[*He leaps to settee, pulls out his old tin trunk from under it and begins to fill it excitedly.* MR. MOKE *comes in.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Mournfully*] I was in the middle of a boiled egg. . . .

MICKY. Help me pack ! I'm going, too !

MR. MOKE. [*Eagerly*] What, he really asked you ?

MICKY. Get my suitcase !

MR. MOKE. Eh ?

MICKY. Get my suitcase ! Chuck my things in !

MR. MOKE. [*Jocosely*] Now that's good news !

MICKY. You see the state I'm in. Moke . . . look at my hands.

MR. MOKE. Eh ?

MICKY. [*Shuddering*] All of a tremble. Moke—if he hadn't asked me, what the hell would I have done here alone ?

MR. MOKE. You'd have had me.

MICKY. [*Kissing*] Camarade !

MR. MOKE. [*Distastefully*] Pull yourself together. Slobbering over my face. . . .

[MICKY *exits into bathroom, singing discordantly, " I'll take the high road, and you take the low road. . . ."* MR. MOKE *joins in jovially, busying himself urgently with suitcase.*]

MICKY. [*Off*] My shoes ! [*They come flying into the room.*]

MR. MOKE. Here, don't chuck them in. It's the only pair you've got. You can't go to Scotland in slippers. Where's your other suit ?

MICKY. [*Off*] Haven't got one.

MR. MOKE. Eh ? Only one suit ?

MICKY. [*Off*] That's all.

MR. MOKE. [*Muttering*] You lads make me cry. . . . I suppose you *have* got a spare pair of socks ?

MICKY. [*Off*] When Simon's not wearing 'em.

[MICKY *totters in, laden with bathgown, pyjamas, etc., in disarray. He has changed into lounge suit.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Darkly*] If you go staggering into King's Cross like that, you won't get a train—you'll get a Black Maria.

MICKY. Here are my cartoons. [*Bundling them in.*]

MR. MOKE. Got your fare ?

MICKY. [*Smoothly*] Not yet. But you're going to lend it me.

MR. MOKE. [*Resignedly*] As long as we know. . . . What about those evening togs ?

MICKY. Back to Morris Angel right away ! And get me a rebate for moth-balls. Moke . . . I'm feeling limp.

MR. MOKE. I'm not surprised.

MICKY. [*Feelingly*] God—whenever I thought of sticking on here alone, I got a sinking feeling right down in my tum. . . . [*A knock*—JACKIE *comes in.*]

Hullo, dear.

JACKIE. [*Cheerfully*] Hullo. Simon going soon ?

MICKY. Very soon.

JACKIE. [*With a moué at* MR. MOKE's *back*] Micky—could I speak to you alone ?

MICKY. Of course, dear. [*Grinning to* MR. MOKE] All right, tactful.

MR. MOKE. [*Accommodatingly*] Oh. I'll get back to my egg. [*Exits.*]

JACKIE. I saw you go out in your evening clothes.

MICKY. Did you ?

JACKIE. [*Proudly*] You looked grand !

MICKY. [*Chuckling*] Well, I didn't smell so grand. Where were you ?

JACKIE. Sitting in Lyons' across the road. [*Glowing*] I got such an awful thrill when I saw you dressed up ! We were waiting ever so long.

MICKY. We ?

JACKIE. I was with that girl of Simon's—you know, Judy. I met her there.

MICKY. Judy ?

JACKIE. [*Swiftly*] Micky, we just saw Simon go out ! She's on the stairs. She's—she's just dying to look round the room sentimentally like—before he goes.

MICKY. [*Pointing to door*] She's downstairs ?

JACKIE. [*With a little giggle*] She's so damn nervous. . . . [*Then watching* MICKY's *strained face*] Don't look at me like that. I'll take her away if you want.

[*She goes to the door, opens it, then pauses, looking back uneasily.*]

Micky—that's your suitcase. . . .?

[*He does not answer. She comes back, seizing him fiercely.*]

You're going away ! You are, you are !

MICKY. [*Stiffly*] Jackie, don't make a scene.

JACKIE. You're leaving—for good !

MICKY. It all happened in rather a rush. I was going to tell you. . . .

JACKIE. [*Bursting into tears*] I won't let you go !

MICKY. Jackie—don't be a fool.

JACKIE. [*Sobbing*] I can't let you go—I can't, I can't !

MICKY. There isn't much of a life left here for me—alone.

JACKIE. [*Through her tears*] You mean—now that Simon's going ?

MICKY. Yes.

JACKIE. Does he mean so much to you ?

[MICKY *nods : turns away.*]

You don't mind hurting me, do you ?—so long as he's not hurt.

MICKY. You're not making this easy for me.

JACKIE. [*Despairingly*] I should have seen it all the time. . . . Every look on your face, every thought you've had, it's always been for him. . . . Can't you feel something for me, too ?

[*As he still does not answer.*]

How can you be so cruel ? [*Raging*] All the time it's Simon—Simon—Simon . . . !

MICKY. [*Vaguely*] You'd better go down to Judy. . . . For God's sake, don't leave her standing there.

JACKIE. In case Simon finds her ?

MICKY. Yes.

JACKIE. [*Harshly*] So *that's* what you're afraid of ?

MICKY. [*Gripping her*] He's on top of the world now—I shan't have him hurt again.

JACKIE. Take your hands off me !

MICKY. Do what you like with me—but leave him alone. D'you hear, leave him alone !

JACKIE. [*Tearing herself free*] He hasn't left me alone !

MICKY. He's done you no harm !

JACKIE. [*Passionately*] He's taking you away from me ! Isn't that harm enough ? [*Then, pleadingly*] Oh, Micky—d'you want me to grovel to you ? D'you want me to have no pride at all ? . . . You make me feel like mud, the way I have to crawl in front of you. Well, I've got no pride. I've got nothing—but you.

[*Pause.*]

MICKY. I'm not worth all that.

JACKIE. And you're still going ?

MICKY. Yes.

JACKIE. [*Hysterically*] It's cruel, it's cruel !

[JUDY *enters.*]

JUDY. I heard you quarrelling. I had to come in.

MICKY. Hullo, Judy.

JUDY. [*Distressed*] Is it over me ?

MICKY. No.

JACKIE. He's going away. With Simon.

JUDY. [*Steadily*] That's natural, isn't it ?

JACKIE. *You* think it's natural ? What about you ?

JUDY. I'm happy—if they're happy. And it's hardly my affair.

JACKIE. You being left with a kid—isn't that your affair ?

JUDY. [*Angrily*] Jackie !

JACKIE. Everybody's so damn heroic. . . .

JUDY. [*Sharply*] I'm not. But I can look after myself. . . . Sorry. Now don't be silly. [*Firmly*] The world isn't going to end if Micky goes away.

JACKIE. It will, though, for me.

JUDY. [*Over* JACKIE'S *shoulder*] This isn't your tactful evening, is it, Micky ?

MICKY. Sorry.

JUDY. Well—say how d'you do.

MICKY. How've you been?

JUDY. Fine!

MICKY. Keeping well?

JUDY. Couldn't be better. [*To* JACKIE] Blow your nose, silly. You'll be all right. . . . [*Steadily*] Well, Micky, there isn't much time left to talk things over, is there?

MICKY. [*Turning away from her tiredly*] No.

JUDY. In a little while it'll be too late to say the things—he may want to say to me—and the things I may want to say to him.

MICKY. Do you want him back?

JUDY. [*Gently*] Stupidly enough—I'm still in love with him.

MICKY. [*Strugglingly*] I heard about your trouble—but I don't know how he feels. . . .

JUDY. We'll soon find out.

[MICKY *sits, distressed.*]

This is between us, Micky . . . Just you and me. I know how you feel about him. Well—one of us must suffer. . . . And I think I need him most.

MICKY. Judy, please.

JUDY. I left him for his sake. It nearly broke my heart. Well, I couldn't go on distracting him. . . . I left him to his work. Things haven't been nice for me. I've lived—horribly. Now Simon's on his feet for life—I want to know if he still thinks of me—and if he wants me back.

[MICKY *does not answer.*]

[*Wryly*] I'm not being awfully humble. But I daren't be now. I am in love with him.

[SIMON *has come in. He stands stiffly in the doorway.*]

SIMON. Judy.

JUDY. Hullo. . . .

SIMON. Did you come to see me? [*Takes a half nervous, half eager step forward.*]

JUDY. Yes.

SIMON. [*A little shaken*] Why?

JUDY. I'm a sentimental creature. I wanted to hear from Micky just how everything was with you.

SIMON. [*Harder now*] Well, everything's fine !

JUDY. I'm pleased.

SIMON. And if that's all you wanted to know. . . .

JUDY. [*Softly*] Don't be aggressive, dear. There's not a bit of need for that.

SIMON. [*At length : grumpily*] You're quite right. Not a bit of need for *that*. Did Micky tell you everything you wanted to know ?

JUDY. He hasn't had much chance.

SIMON. [*Tapping his chest*] Ask away ! Inquiry bureau here !

[*At the sight of her face :*]

Sorry. . . .

JUDY. It was only friendliness that brought me here. I don't think a little friendliness would shatter *you*.

SIMON. What is it you wanted to know ?

JUDY. Have you got what you wanted ?

SIMON. Swell job ! In Aberdeen. I'm joining the School of Tropical Medicine.

JUDY. I'm so glad. Are you ?

SIMON. Sure.

JUDY. [*Smiling*] You must be awfully bucked. . . . So you're a Bachelor of Science at last ? Well, you've worked hard, haven't you ? . . . [*Gently*] I was in the hall to-day when you got your degree.

SIMON. [*Oddly*] You—were ?

JUDY. I couldn't really have missed it . . . I was awfully proud !

SIMON. Seems—you've been almost following my career. . . .

JUDY. Why not ? I'm not a snob, you know.

SIMON. Well—how've you been ?

JUDY. All right. Living in Bayswater. I've got a job.

SIMON. [*Curiously*] Job . . . ? I didn't think. . . . ?

JUDY. What *did* you think ?

SIMON. I thought you got—hitched up—with that Geoffrey fellow . . . that old flame of yours. . . .

JUDY. Why ?

SIMON. [*Confused*] Why ? Why, what ? . . . I mean . . . you went off with him. . . .

JUDY. I hardly went because of him. You've taken an awful lot for granted. And it wasn't quite nice of you.

SIMON. [*Harshly*] No ? Leaving me like dirt because that —that stuck-up prig, that damned Geoffrey, came here looking down his nose and making cracks at us. . . . *You* were well out of it, all right. . . .

JUDY. [*Flaring up*] You fool !

SIMON. [*Recklessly*] I'm no fool. . . .

JUDY. You are—and a wicked one ! [*Passionately*] I left you because I didn't want to tie a millstone round your neck ! I went through hell—because I knew what was coming. . . .

SIMON. Coming. . . . ?

JACKIE. [*Spitefully*] Another manly hero. Yes—she means her kid.

JUDY. [*With a resentful sigh*] Now you know. And I think it's just as well.

SIMON. [*Limply*] Oh, my God.

JACKIE. Knocked you all of a heap, has it ? [*Pointing to* JUDY.] Now try to think what sort of a heap it knocked her in.

MICKY. [*Savagely*] You've said enough.

SIMON. [*Faintly*] Are you—all right ?

JUDY. Of course I'm all right. [*She softens at the sight of his distracted face*] I don't starve. I've got an allowance from my father—and then there's my job.

SIMON. Is it. . . . ?

JACKIE. [*As* JUDY *has some difficulty in answering*] Yes, you can refer to your offspring as " he ".

MICKY. Damn you—do you enjoy rubbing it in to him. . . . ?

JACKIE. And there's your precious friend—he knew about her all the time. He *knew*, he knew. . . . !

JUDY. [*Gently*] Jackie . . . you're such a fool.

[*She goes to the door—pauses and looks back. She is held there, sensing the sudden tension in the room.* MICKY *stands staring at* SIMON *with burning eyes.*]

SIMON. [*To* MICKY] You knew ?

MICKY. [*Thickly*] Don't look at me like that.

SIMON. That was pretty lousy, wasn't it ?

JUDY. Simon—that won't help. . . .

[MRS. MOKE *enters.*]

MRS. MOKE. [*Warmly*] Your taxi's 'ere !

[*No one replies.* MRS. MOKE *seems left a little helpless in the stillness of the room :*]

[*Weakly*] I said, your taxi's 'ere. . . . Moke's coming up for your bags. . . .

[*Then, nervously, hurries into passage and shouts down.*]

Moke ! Quick !

[SIMON *leaps on* MICKY *savagely—as* MR. MOKE *comes in.*]

MR. MOKE. [*Truculently*] What is this ?

[*Thrusts himself into the struggle, tearing* SIMON *and* MICKY *apart.*]

JUDY. [*Despairingly*] Oh, that won't help ! It won't help a little bit !

[SIMON *sits and turns away.* MICKY *ruffled and panting, re-sets his tie.*]

MRS. MOKE. [*Horrified*] That was nice ! And the two of you like brothers.

JACKIE. Micky. . . . [*Clings nervously to his arm.*]

MICKY. [*Bitterly*] You did a good job then. [*Withdraws from her*] I'll be all right.

MR. MOKE. [*Aggravatedly*] I'm not ! Who copped me in the eye ?

MRS. MOKE. [*Angrily*] Clumsy.

MR. MOKE. [*Fiercely*] You'll be telling me next I dotted meself! [*Holding up eye anxiously*] Is it black?

MRS. MOKE. Take the 'orrible thing away! [MR. MOKE *exits, muttering.*]

JUDY. [*Feebly*] Simon—I didn't mean to do that.

MRS. MOKE. [*Turning on her vehemently*] Didn't you? Why did you come at all then? [*She goes to door glaring at* JUDY] Young woman—things might have turned out well for those two lads—and you 'ad to come pushing between . . . I never thought I'd see *you* back! [*Exits.*]

MICKY. Be a dear and go, Jackie.

[*She exits, half crying.*]

Simon.

[SIMON *does not answer.*]

I only knew—I'd have given anything to see you happy. I tried to help—I just couldn't bear her hurting you when you needed all your brain to sweat through those exams.

[*Still* SIMON *does not answer.*]

I was lonely—I didn't want to lose you, that's all. There hasn't been the devil of a lot for me in life—but you. [*With an effort*] Well, I guess I'm not wanted here.

JUDY. [*Hurt*] Oh, Micky. . . .

SIMON. [*Harshly*] No. You and I'll settle this alone.

[MICKY *exits.*]

JUDY. [*Curiously, with dignity*] Simon, there's nothing to settle.

SIMON. Nothing to settle. . . .? [*Aback*] But it's my duty. . . .

JUDY. [*Breathlessly*] Duty? You awful fool—don't talk of duty to me!

SIMON. Judy, I never saw that expression on your face before. Don't hate me so.

JUDY. [*Dimly*] Then don't be chivalrous. I can bear anything—but that.

SIMON. [*Despairingly*] How can you stand there so damn

righteously—preaching at me . . . that kid's mine . . . !

JUDY. Mine !

SIMON. I've got to see it. . . . [*Advances*].

JUDY. [*Retreating*] Not yet.

SIMON. [*Wearily*] Oh, God. I thought I deserved better of you than that.

JUDY. Why ?

SIMON. Why ? Was I nothing to you once ? Weren't you anything to me ?

JUDY. [*Still retreating*] Listen, Simon—no, don't touch me ! . . . When things went to pieces between us, you'll never know just what misery I went through. But don't you see ?—it was worth it ! You're *something* now ! Yes, I am proud of you—terribly proud. . . . I've waited so patiently —just for this day. Always hoping you'd learned what I've learned—hoping that you want me back. But you've understood nothing—we're back where we were before. . . . [*Near to tears, crosses to door.*]

SIMON. No. [*Ahead of her, shuts it.*]

JUDY. Simon.

SIMON. You don't go any more.

JUDY. You don't need to be generous. . . .

SIMON. [*Dryly*] Do you want me to humble myself ? I've needed you like hell.

JUDY. Needed—me ?

SIMON. There's never been a moment when I haven't thought of you—and ached for you. . . .

JUDY. Now you're making me cry.

SIMON. If I hadn't thought you'd gone off to do better for yourself with that Geoffrey chap—I'd have chased after you somehow. I'd have dragged you back. Do you want me to cross my throat on that ?

JUDY. Wait . . . Let me pull myself together. . . .

SIMON. Oh, no. [*Stands close to her*] Look up, will you ?

[*She does so.*]

I mean at me.

JUDY. Well ?

SIMON. [*Tautly*] We made mistakes and busted things up. We'll probably go on making mistakes—and busting things up. . . . But I think we'll always come together again. It'll be worth it somehow. . . . What do you think ?

JUDY. [*Breathlessly*] I can't think. . . .

SIMON. You can.

[*Pause.*]

O.K. ?

[*She tries to speak.*]

Now let's go.

JUDY. [*Dazed*] Go ?

SIMON. To Aberdeen. Got a coat ?

JUDY. Of course I've got a coat. . . .

SIMON. It's all you'll need. [*Hustles bags to landing.*]

JUDY. But I daren't. . . .

SIMON. [*Impetuously*] Walk—or be carried ?

JUDY. What about my job. . . . ?

SIMON. Never mind your job. Grab this bag.

JUDY. [*Wailing*] I haven't got a thing ! I'm naked !

SIMON. Lady Godiva arrives in Aberdeen. [*Calling below*] Moke—get my things on that taxi ! Time for that train !

JUDY. [*Fierily*] I won't be bullied.

[SIMON *grips her tenderly.*]

SIMON. Judy !—we're beginning things properly now. Marriage lines and everything. Well ? The door's open—if you want to go. Only, please don't.

JUDY. [*Moaning*] Haven't even got a nightie. . . .

SIMON. [*Softly*] You goop. . . . Now let's go.

JUDY. Say good-bye to Micky.

[SIMON *pauses—calls up* " MICKY ! "]

Be sweet to him, Simon. I know how awful he's feeling now.

[MICKY *comes into the doorway.*]

SIMON. [*With an effort*] So long, Micky. . . . Sorry about before.

MICKY. So long.
SIMON. Smile. [*Hesitates, then shakes* MICKY's *hand.*]
MICKY. Sure. Look. [*Smiles.*]
SIMON. That's fine.

[*Exits hurriedly with* JUDY. MICKY *follows them on to landing.*]

MICKY. [*Shouting down*] Write to me, will you ?
SIMON's VOICE. [*Faintly*] I'll write.
MICKY. And be happy !
SIMON's VOICE. [*Fainter still*] What ?
MICKY. I said . . . be happy !

[*He comes back centre. The room seems suddenly quiet. He kneels beside his trunk, beginning to unpack it slowly.* JACKIE *comes into the doorway.*]

JACKIE. [*Emotionally*] I'm sorry, Micky—for what I did. But I had to, you know.

MICKY. [*Vaguely*] That's all right.

JACKIE. You don't want me here—just now, do you ? I mean, while you unpack. . . .

[*He shakes his head.*]

Don't be down in the mouth. I'm here.

MICKY. Yes.

JACKIE. [*Wistfully*] I always am, you know.

MICKY. I know.

JACKIE. Can we have some supper together later ? I don't want you to be alone.

[MICKY *nods.*]

All right. I'll be about.
MICKY. O.K.

[*She exits. He goes on unpacking as :*]

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